

THE STRAITS TIMES

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New Inspector-General's Office to ensure SAF safety

Mindef announces raft of safety measures as defence chief calls for 'zero-accident' mindset

Lim Min Zhang

The Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) is setting up a new Inspector-General's Office (IGO) that will report directly to the Chief of Defence Force and have full authority to scrutinise and enforce safety processes and practices at all levels.

The new office is among a raft of

measures undertaken by the SAF in the wake of actor Aloysius Pang's death on Jan 23, four days after the operationally ready national serviceman was hurt in a military exercise.

Other moves include increasing the number of safety inspection teams and full-time safety officers to perform checks and audits on unit-level safety systems in the army, which will progressively lift

an ongoing safety timeout from next Friday.

As part of an unprecedented move by the SAF to lower the training tempo across all services in the next few months, the army will also review whether to scale back its exercises, and will redesign and even remove selected training courses.

The IGO was announced by Chief of Defence Force Melvyn Ong at a meeting with 750 commanders, comprising both active and operationally ready servicemen, at Pasir Laba Camp yesterday.

A Ministry of Defence statement

said Lieutenant-General Ong called for all servicemen to adopt a "zero-accident" mindset, where they go about daily tasks with alertness and mindfulness so as to "do things right the first time, every time".

"Safety is a command responsibility. Commanders answer for the training and safety of their men. To do so, commanders have to be fully committed and personally and intimately involved in their unit's training, operations and safety," he said.

Lt-Gen Ong said he, as well as the army, air force and navy chiefs and commanders at all levels, will make

more visits to SAF units to ensure training is safe.

The defence chief added that a lower training tempo – referring to the duration, frequency and intensity of training activities – will allow SAF units to review their training programmes comprehensively to reduce the safety risk for servicemen.

No details were given on when the new IGO will be set up, its size and composition, or who will head it.

The army, navy and air force have their own safety inspectorates headed by full colonels that report to their respective service chiefs.

The Straits Times understands that the new IGO will perform an additional level of audits and checks, as well as promote safety education, beyond what the inspectorates now do in each service.

Defence analyst Ho Shu Huang of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies said the new IGO could reflect an acknowledgement that there are still gaps in safety that need to be closed, even if the safety regime is generally robust.

"There may have, unfortunately, been areas which were overlooked, and the Inspector-General's job is to ensure complete and absolute compliance. Ninety-nine per cent might not be good enough – 100 per cent is what is demanded now," he added.

SAF training safety has come under the spotlight after Corporal First Class (NS) Pang's death – the fifth reported since September 2017, before which the SAF had four years of zero training- and operations-related fatalities. A Committee of Inquiry led by a State Court-nominated judge was convened last Friday to investigate the death.

Defence Minister Ng Eng Hen wrote on Facebook last night: "We await the findings and recommendations of the independent panel. In the meantime, the SAF must continue to strengthen its safety systems, starting from the very top to reach the last soldier on the ground."

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SEE TOP OF THE NEWS A5

Pahang Sultan sworn in as Malaysia's King

Pahang Sultan Abdullah Ri'ayatuddin was given a grand welcome in Parliament yesterday before being sworn in as Malaysia's 16th King at Istana Negara, the national palace in Kuala Lumpur. With him was his wife, Tunku Azizah Aminah Maimunah Iskandariah Sultan Iskandar, who was dressed in a matching light blue outfit, as well as Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad and other senior officials. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

SEE WORLD A8



MOT: KL says \$15m remitted for deferred HSR

Singapore's Transport Ministry said yesterday it has received confirmation from Malaysia, via diplomatic correspondence, that \$15 million

has been remitted for abortive costs incurred over the postponement of the High-Speed Rail (HSR) project.

Both countries agreed last September to suspend the project for about two years, and Malaysia agreed to reimburse Singapore \$15 million by end-January. The abortive costs include monies Singapore has to pay contractors for terminating projects.

SEE TOP OF THE NEWS A7

S'poreans, PRs worked fewer hours a week on average in 2018

Singaporeans and permanent residents here are working fewer hours per week on average. This comes as more take up part-time jobs and are aided by technology in their work.

Figures released yesterday by the Manpower Ministry showed that

employed Singaporeans and permanent residents clocked an average of 43 hours per week last year.

This is down from a high of 46.6 hours in 2010, and 43.2 hours in 2017. The figure refers to the usual hours worked per week, which covers a typical weekly work schedule including regular overtime hours, even if they are unpaid.

But workers in some industries, such as transportation and storage, still pulled in long hours.

Overall, more people in Singapore were working last year.

SEE BUSINESS C1

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1 Bangkok battles haze
Bangkok's governor has appealed for help to battle the haze that has blanketed the Thai capital for weeks. The authorities yesterday dispatched drones to disperse water to clear the air, but the move was widely ridiculed on social media. **WORLD A11**



Children wearing face masks leaving their school early due to air pollution in Bangkok on Wednesday. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

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INTERACTIVE

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VIDEO

Hangout with ST

This week's hottest topics include the HIV Registry data leak, the brouhaha over attire checks at Nanyang Girls' High School and the shaming of Asian food on American reality show *The Bachelor*.
<http://str.sg/hangout49>

2 SAF's new safety measures

The Singapore Armed Forces will set up a new Inspector-General's Office that will report directly to the Chief of Defence Force and have full authority to scrutinise and enforce safety processes and practices at all levels. This was among the measures on training safety announced by the Ministry of Defence. **TOP OF THE NEWS A1**

3 Orchard makeover ideas

Orchard makeover ideas
A 500m stretch of Orchard Road may be shut to traffic permanently as part of plans to rejuvenate the street and turn the Dhoby Ghaut area into a green oasis.

This was among the ideas proposed by government agencies on Wednesday to make Singapore's premier shopping belt more than a retail destination.

TOP OF THE NEWS A6

4 Trump upbeat about talks

President Donald Trump said negotiations are going well on the last day of high-level trade talks between the United States and China, but that no deal will be final until he meets Chinese President Xi Jinping. **WORLD A9**

5 Time to reduce HIV stigma

The HIV Registry data leak has led to a review of security measures and efforts to reduce the fallout on patients. It is also an opportune time to reflect on the bigger picture of HIV in Singapore, specifically the high level of HIV-related stigma and discrimination in this country, says Action for Aids president Roy Chan. **OPINION A17**

6 Third dig at the Padang

■ Digging at the Padang
A dig is taking place at the historic Padang. The pit, measuring 2m by 1m, was set up yesterday.

It is the third archaeological dig at the Padang. According to published archaeological reports, previous digs there were conducted in 2003 and 2009. **HOME B2**

7 Seven get Muis study award

Seven Muslim students pursuing social work received awards from the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (Muis) during the Madrasah Teachers Symposium. Ranging from \$5,000 to \$10,000 each, the Muis Social Work Study Award is for students who, upon graduation, contribute to the development of the Muslim community. **HOME B4**



ST PHOTO: JASMINE CHOONG

9 S'pore golfer tops qualifier

Singapore golfer Amanda Tan (left) will be part of a world-class field at the Feb 28-March 3 HSBC Women's World Championship after she earned a sponsor's exemption by topping a two-day regional qualifying tournament yesterday. The 19-year-old shot a two-under 70 for a 142 total at Sentosa Golf Club's New Tanjong Course to pick 16-year-old Thai Arpipacha Yubol by two strokes.

8 NTU-WeBank partnership

Nanyang Technological University and China's first digital-only bank WeBank have opened a research centre to help customers manage their money in real time, among other projects, in a five-year partnership. **BUSINESS C2**

10 Ideas fresh off the runway

Draw inspiration from the latest Spring/Summer runways when putting your Chinese New Year outfits together. A common thread was a sense of travel and escape reflected in flowy dresses and loose silhouettes. **LIFE D2**

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More people in jobs in 2018, with layoffs at 6-year low: MOM data

But employment situation may be challenging this year amid uncertain economic environment, say observers

Joanna Seow
Manpower Correspondent

More people in Singapore, including foreigners, were working last year as the labour market improved, but observers say the year ahead may be challenging.

The latest full-year estimates released by the Manpower Ministry (MOM) yesterday show that unemployment fell in 2018 and retrenchments dropped to a six-year low.

This is despite economic growth easing slightly from 2017. Advance estimates put growth at 3.3 per cent last year, down from 3.6 per cent in 2017.

MOM data shows that the typical Singaporean in full-time work earned more last year, with median income – including employer contributions to the Central Provident Fund – rising 3.3 per cent year on year to \$4,183 as of June. But the pace of growth slowed from the 5.9 per cent seen in 2017.

DBS economist Irvin Seah said the slower income growth is consistent with the slower pace of economic expansion, and both are expected to be lower this year. MOM noted in its report that year-on-

year income changes are prone to fluctuations because data is captured from a sample survey.

Real median income actually grew over the last five years, at an average of 3.6 per cent per year, higher than the 1.7 per cent per year in the previous five years. Over the same period, real income of Singaporeans at the 20th percentile – those earning lower wages – grew at an even faster pace, at an average of 4.3 per cent per year.

In terms of employment, the workforce grew by 39,300 last year, excluding foreign domestic workers. Of these additional workers, 28,400 were Singaporeans or permanent residents, while 10,900 were foreigners.

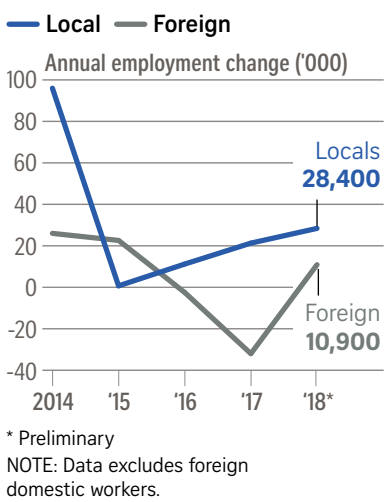
This was a turnaround from 2017, when the number of foreigners – excluding maids – working in Singapore fell by 32,000.

It was the biggest drop in 15 years, and caused a rare drop in total employment.

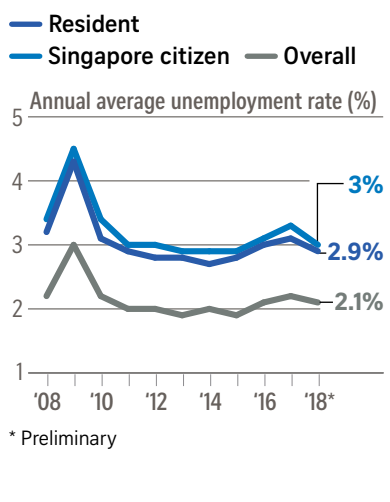
The ministry said the increase last year was driven by the service sector, with more residents employed in industries such as community, social and personal services and information and communications. The number of workers in

Labour market in 2018

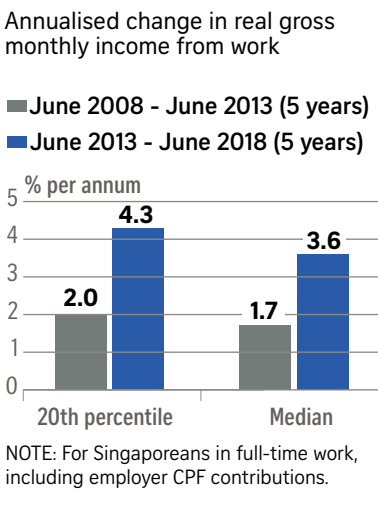
EMPLOYMENT GREW



UNEMPLOYMENT FELL



REAL INCOMES ROSE



Source: MINISTRY OF MANPOWER STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

construction and manufacturing fell for the third and fifth consecutive year, respectively.

CIMB Private Banking economist Song Seng Wun said the growth in the service sector was due to im-

proving external demand in the first half of last year, which lifted more service industries beyond logistics and finance.

"But I expect hiring this year to be more selective as businesses watch

their costs amid the uncertain environment," he said.

The annual average unemployment rate fell to 2.1 per cent last year from 2.2 per cent in 2017.

The rates were 3 per cent for Sin-

gaporeans and 2.9 per cent for residents, down from 3.3 per cent and 3.1 per cent, respectively.

Also, fewer workers were laid off last year as the economy continued to expand. A total of 11,020 workers were retrenched in 2018, down from 14,720 in 2017 and a peak of 19,170 in 2016.

However, MOM noted in a statement that labour market trends from September to December last year were mixed, with a slight uptick in unemployment rates compared with the third quarter of 2018. It expects local workforce growth to remain modest going forward.

National Trades Union Congress assistant secretary-general Patrick Tay, a labour MP, said the labour market figures for the first half of the year should be watched closely, given global trade tensions and technological advances.

"I expect to see more companies doing more reorganisation, reorganisation and mergers and acquisitions, which may result in retrenchments," he said.

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SEE BUSINESS C1



The typical Singaporean in full-time work earned more last year, with median income – including employer contributions to the Central Provident Fund – rising 3.3 per cent year on year to \$4,183 as of June, according to data from the Ministry of Manpower.
ST PHOTO: JASMINE CHOONG

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Doctor in HIV data leak accused of drug trafficking

He is also facing charges under the OSA, and has appealed against an earlier conviction

Shaffiq Alkhatib

A Singaporean doctor at the centre of the HIV information leak is also facing three drug-related charges, including methamphetamine trafficking.

If convicted of trafficking, Ler Teck Siang, 37, can be jailed for up to 20 years, with 15 strokes of the cane.

Ler is accused of administering methamphetamine, commonly known as Ice, to one Sim Eng Chee in a room at the Swissotel The Stamford hotel on Feb 26 last year. Court documents do not reveal details about Sim.

Ler is also accused of being in possession of a syringe – a utensil intended for the administration of a controlled drug – in the lobby of the Conrad Centennial Singapore hotel at around 4.15pm on March 2 last year.

About an hour later, he allegedly failed to provide his urine sample at the Central Narcotics Bureau office in New Bridge Road.

There is no indication in court documents that he was arrested that day.

Ler will appear in court for these drug-related charges on May 29.

On Monday, the Ministry of Health (MOH) revealed that more than 14,200 people living with HIV had their confidential information, including contact details and medical information, leaked online by an American man, Mikhy Farrera Brochez.

Brochez' partner was Ler, who used to head MOH's National Public Health Unit (NPHU).



If convicted of trafficking, Ler Teck Siang (left) can be jailed for up to 20 years, with 15 strokes of the cane. He is also appealing against a conviction and two-year jail sentence for abetting Mikhy Farrera Brochez (above) to commit cheating, and for giving false information to the police and Ministry of Health. PHOTOS: FAITH MEDICAL GROUP, ST FILE

Ler is also facing charges under the Official Secrets Act (OSA) related to the leak. The date for the OSA case has not been fixed.

Court documents for the OSA case show that the doctor had access to a registry, which contained

the names of people who tested HIV-positive in Singapore prior to February 2012.

He is said to have saved the information on a thumbdrive while working at the NPHU.

He allegedly failed to "take rea-

sonable care" of the information by "failing to retain possession" of the thumbdrive between March 2012 and May 23, 2016.

In addition to court appearances for the OSA case and the drug-related charges, Ler has a hearing

coming up next month.

He is appealing against a 2018 conviction and a sentence of two years in jail for abetting Brochez to commit cheating, as well as for giving false information to the police and MOH.

Ler, who does not have HIV, had submitted his own blood sample in place of his HIV-positive boyfriend's to help him get an Employment Pass here.

Following a trial, District Judge Luke Tan found Ler guilty of helping Brochez to deceive the Ministry of Manpower into issuing him an Employment Pass in March 2008 and allowing him to keep the pass in November 2013 after red flags were raised.

Ler was also found guilty in September last year of lying to MOH in December 2013 and the police in January 2014, when he was questioned about a second blood test.

During his trial, Ler claimed he had given these statements under duress. His various allegations were rejected by Judge Tan.

Among other things, Ler said that while he was being questioned, an officer burst into the room, flung medical records on the table and shouted at him to "stop playing games". This was refuted by the relevant officers.

The judge found it hard to believe Ler, who had flip-flopped in his testimony regarding the identity of the officer who was allegedly hostile towards him.

For the trial last year, Ler had engaged defence lawyer Amarjit Singh Sidhu, whom he later discharged.

Speaking to The Straits Times yesterday, the lawyer from Amarjit Sidhu Law Practice said: "He discharged me on the first day of his trial to run his own case. I believe he is still not represented by a lawyer now."

Even though Ler remains a doctor for now, his certificate to practise medicine in Singapore expired at the end of last year and has not been renewed.

Brochez, 34, was sentenced to 28 months in jail in 2017 for offences that included cheating, lying to a public servant, possessing drugs and using forged educational certificates.

He was deported after completing his sentence.

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SEE EDITORIAL & OPINION A17

Commentary

MOH must learn from breaches to build more robust, secure system



Salma Khalik

Senior Health Correspondent

First, it was the massive data breach at Singapore General Hospital in which details of 1.5 million SingHealth patients were stolen, including Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong's medical records.

That was last year.

This week, the Ministry of Health (MOH) revealed that confidential information related to 14,200 people on the HIV Registry, and 2,400 of their contacts, was illegally copied about five years ago and publicly released recently.

While the links to this information have been blocked for now, it still remains in an outsider's custody. This means that someone can again go public with it.

These breaches, with news of one coming hot on the heels of the other, mean that MOH must once again take flak for failing to protect confidential information. Even its ability to do so is being questioned.

One knee-jerk reaction is that we should say goodbye to the proposal that requires all healthcare institutions to input the data of their patients so that it can be part of the National Electronic Health Records (NEHR).

But that would be short-sighted.

That is because the rationale for setting up such a centralised record still remains valid: It will give doctors treating patients a complete picture of their medical condition. It can save a lot of time, and perhaps even the person's life, in an emergency situation.

We shouldn't throw the baby out with the bathwater.

But we also must not complacently go ahead when recent incidents have shown up dangerous gaps in security.

Before there is further talk of



Before there is further talk of making the National Electronic Health Records compulsory here, MOH must be very confident it can truly safeguard this information, which will be accessible to thousands of healthcare workers. ST PHOTO: ONG WEE JIN

One knee-jerk reaction is that we should say goodbye to the proposal that requires all healthcare institutions to input the data of their patients so that it can be part of the National Electronic Health Records. But that would be short-sighted. That is because the rationale for setting up such a centralised record still remains valid.

making the NEHR compulsory for all patient records here, MOH will have to be very confident that it can truly safeguard this sensitive information, which will be accessible to thousands of healthcare workers.

What happened with the SingHealth breach was bad. But it could have been even worse if the incursion did not stop at just theft of data.

Imagine the consequences if the hackers had been able to go in and alter the information in patients' records.

So, a perfectly healthy person might suddenly find that he has

been labelled a stroke victim. Or an uncontrolled diabetic could have that status erased and doctors might not know about his dangerously high sugar levels when they prescribe medication. Or patients could be given follow-up medication at grossly different dosages.

That would be catastrophic.

Since MOH discovered that Ler Teck Siang had illegally copied the data from the HIV Registry, stringent security measures have been put in place to prevent a repeat of this in future.

That is locking the stable doors after the horse has bolted.

Is that enough? Of course not.

The healthcare system collects all kinds of data. It is practically a mantra here.

First, there is an array of reportable infectious diseases, such as HIV/Aids, syphilis, tuberculosis and hepatitis... and the list goes on.

How safe are the details on these lists?

What about data residing at the Institute of Mental Health? No one with schizophrenia or bipolar disorder would want anyone to know of it. How safe is such data?

Given the spate of breaches, everyone here is probably paranoid

about his medical records.

And can we blame them?

Someone with such confidential information, who does not go public with it the way Mikhy Farrera Brochez did, can still do major damage. Blackmail comes to mind. The data might also be sold to interested, but not ethical, parties.

The SingHealth breach was caused by outside hackers.

The HIV one – and there was also the doctor at KK Women's and Children's Hospital who had accessed the medical information of two of his former girlfriends – was caused by a person with legitimate access who abused his position of trust.

Going forward, we have to accept that there will be similar attempts again. Human nature is such. It would be stupid to expect that all doctors and other medical professionals who have access to our data are a breed apart.

So, MOH has to build systems that make it extremely difficult, if not impossible, for anyone to needlessly access such information.

One way is to have two-factor authentication, as we now have with SingPass.

In this case, the "two factors" would be the medical practitioner and the patient. Both must sign in before the information can be retrieved. This will give patients say over their own medical records and who can access them.

The only exception should be in hospital emergency departments, where time is critical. Even there, access should be limited to certain terminals, which should be guarded and secured.

As for potential hackers, the Government appears to have prioritised that problem, given the two ministerial statements made in Parliament last month by Health Minister Gan Kim Yong and Minister for Communications and Information S. Iswaran.

If these breaches result in a far more robust and secure system for Singapore, that is the silver lining that would make all the angst suffered now worthwhile.

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S'pore Army to review scope of exercises amid focus on safety

It will redesign programmes and even remove certain courses as part of lowered training pace: Chief of Army



PROGRESSIVE LIFTING OF SAFETY TIMEOUT

For other training activities, we will lift (the timeout) as and when we are satisfied that the reviews are completed. We expect that there will be selective training activities that will require more time, and that will be lifted as and when the reviews are completed.

MAJOR-GENERAL GOH SI HOU, Chief of Army, on how the safety timeout will be lifted progressively from next Friday.

Lim Min Zhang

The Singapore Army will be reviewing the scope of its military exercises, redesigning training programmes and even removing certain courses as part of the lowered training pace in the next few months to focus on safety, said Chief of Army Goh Si Hou yesterday.

For instance, some confidence courses from command schools will be removed as the army reviews training activities across units and prioritises the key ones.

It will also be redesigning its training to be more focused on its objectives and to be better able to spread out the intensity of the training, so soldiers can prepare better and training can be conducted effectively.

As part of the lowered tempo, this year's Exercise Wallaby, the largest overseas training exercise for the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF), could be scaled back, said Major-General Goh.

"We are looking at re-scoping the scale of our exercises, including our overseas exercises... so that we can really free up capacity and allow every unit to focus on their training," he added.

The army chief was speaking to reporters after a meeting of 750 commanders, comprising both active and operationally



Gunnery personnel from the Artillery Formation paying their respects to Corporal First Class (NS) Aloysius Pang as servicemen carried his casket at Paya Lebar Air Base after his body was flown back to Singapore from New Zealand on Jan 25. PHOTO: MINDEF

ready national servicemen (NS-men), at Pasir Laba Camp.

Chief of Defence Force Melvyn Ong had gathered the commanders following the death of actor Aloysius Pang, 28, on Jan 23.

Corporal First Class (NS) Pang died four days after he was seriously injured while doing repair work in a Singapore Self-Propelled Howitzer during an exercise in New Zealand.

On Jan 24, Lieutenant-General Ong announced the unprecedented move to reduce training tempo - referring to the duration, frequency and intensity of training activities - across all three services to free up time and space to focus on safety.

All services have been tasked to review how they would lower their training tempo after the army lifts its safety timeout, which has been imposed since Jan 23.

Maj-Gen Goh said yesterday the safety timeout will be lifted progressively from next Friday, with the resumption of classroom training, physical training, small arms live-firing, as well as the Individual Physical Proficiency Test (IPPT) and IPPT Preparatory Training for NSmen.

"For other training activities, we will lift (the timeout) as and when we are satisfied that the reviews are completed. We expect that there will be selective training activities that will require more time, and that will be lifted as and when the reviews are completed," he added.

Maj-Gen Goh said the army has taken a more structured and inclusive approach to its latest safety timeout, which is reportedly at least the seventh time it has been triggered by the SAF since 2008.

Besides having units conduct their safety reviews, soldiers have

also been "actively involved" in giving their feedback and raising suggestions to enhance safety on the ground, said Maj-Gen Goh.

Soldiers have also been encouraged to report unsafe practices to their commanders or to the army safety hotline.

Lieutenant-Colonel Deborah Koh, 37, who commands the 16th Command, Control, Communications, Computers and Intelligence Battalion, said that her unit is looking at strengthening the "safety instinct" in every soldier.

"Safety is not just a command responsibility, but everyone's job," she added. "So, it is important to educate them to look out for one another, not to take shortcuts, and to discard this mentality of 'it will not happen to me'."

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Thumbs up for idea of car-free Dhoby Ghaut area

But observers, stakeholders say landlords and retailers key to success of rejuvenation efforts

Tiffany Fumiko Tay

A 500m stretch of Orchard Road may be shut to traffic permanently as part of plans to rejuvenate the street and turn the Dhoby Ghaut area into a green oasis.

This was among the ideas proposed by government agencies on Wednesday to make Singapore's premier shopping belt more than a retail destination.

Observers and stakeholders said that while the proposal to shut part of a major thoroughfare may cause traffic issues, the pay-off could be worth it. Property owners and mall developers, however, hold the key to the success or failure of the rejuvenation efforts, they added.

The Land Transport Authority said it is exploring the pedestrianisation of a section of Dhoby Ghaut, and further study is required before finalising the details.

The proposed road closure would involve the stretch between Buyong and Handy roads, or the Istana and the junction before The Cathay.

Nanyang Technological University senior research fellow Gopinath Menon said traffic would be affected, but its effects would be manageable as the section proposed for pedestrianisation does not affect access to buildings in the area such as Plaza Singapura.

Turning the opposite street, Penang Road, into a two-way road and diverting traffic there can work, though he said that a lane should remain open to buses as

"having these huge buses make turns becomes very messy".

"There will be some initial unhappiness but, after a few days, things will adjust – traffic finds its own way," said Mr Menon.

Mr Bernie Tay, co-owner of burger chain Fatboy's The Burger Bar, which has a street-facing outlet at MacDonald House, said: "As a retailer in the area, I think it is a fantastic idea."

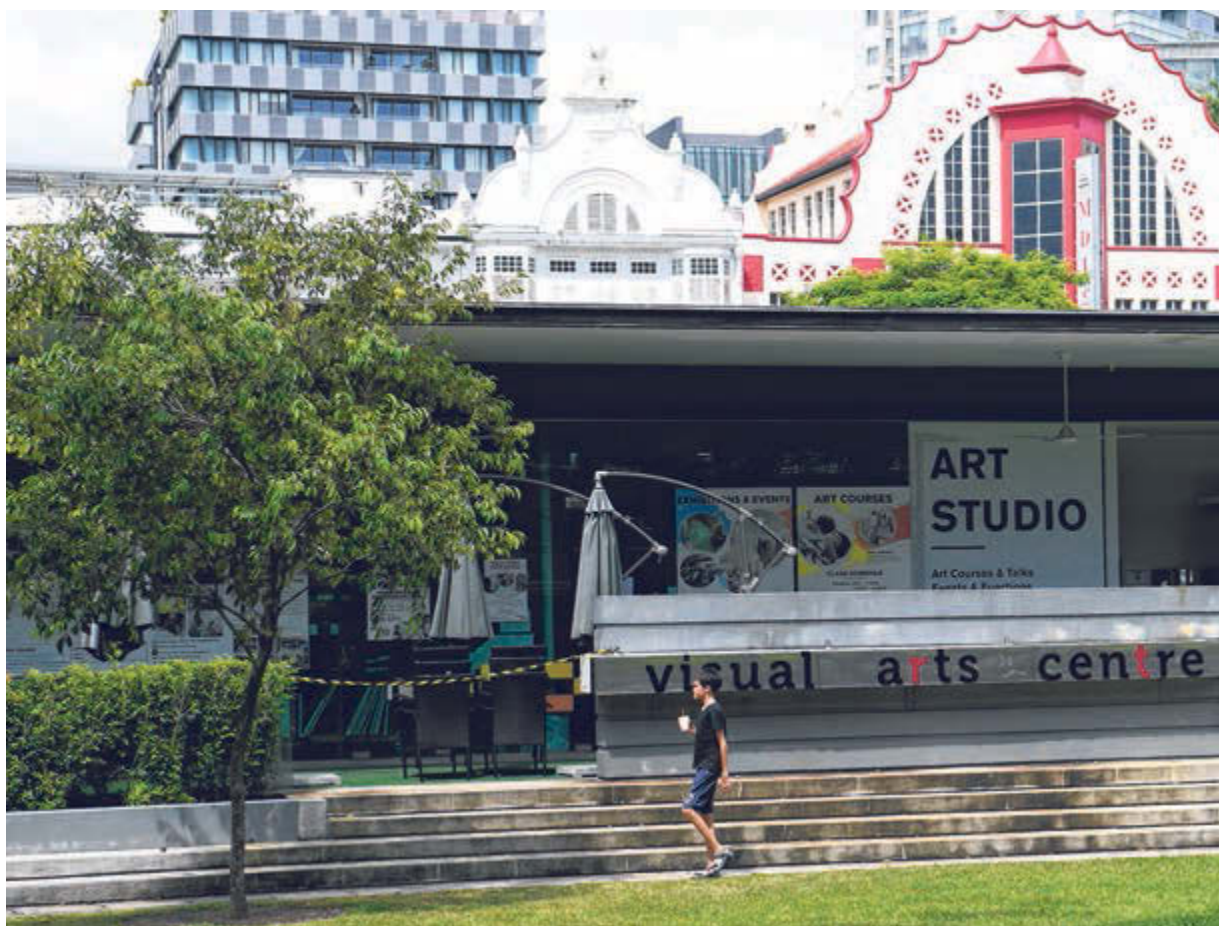
"There are already existing green spaces though, and no one goes there. Unless they create a lot of amenities and attractions for people to go to, it will be one big empty park," he added.

Among the confirmed plans for the 2.4km Orchard Road is having different offerings between the Tanglin, Somerset, Orchard and Dhoby Ghaut areas.

But stakeholders have said that landlords and retailers must play their part in the transformation inside the malls.

The Singapore Retail Association (SRA) said it agrees that more than infrastructure improvements are needed. This year's Great Singapore Sale, which it organises, will be revamped and promote local designers and talents, said SRA president R. Dhinakaran.

A leading retailer with dozens of shops in Orchard Road who declined to be named said that while malls must be willing to compromise on rental income to support lifestyle offerings from young entrepreneurs, there may be roadblocks as most malls on the shopping belt are under



The Land Transport Authority said it is exploring the pedestrianisation of a section of Dhoby Ghaut, and further study is required before finalising the details. ST PHOTO: SAHIBA CHAUDHARY



Source: URBAN REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

real estate investment trusts, which are driven to maximise profits.

Orchard Road developers and mall managers were mostly mum on their plans to participate in rejuvenation efforts or align their tenant mixes with the themes of the sub-precincts. Wisma Atria, Ngee Ann City, The Centrepoint, Tanglin Mall, The Cathay and the Cathay Cineleisure Orchard mall, 313@Somerset and Plaza Singapura declined to comment or did not respond by press time.

Orchard Road saw some 7.3 million tourist visits in 2017, up from 6.4 million in 2013.

Far East Organization's chief operating officer for its retail business group Mavis Seow said that its Orchard Central mall already caters to the younger crowd in the area, while Orchard Turn Developments said that Ion Orchard is working closely with associations and government organisations.

Orchard Road saw some 7.3 million tourist visits in 2017, up from 6.4 million in 2013.

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Past efforts at rejuvenation

1989: A stretch of Orchard Road was closed off to traffic one Sunday a month for bazaars and carnivals, but the closures ended in 1992 after public interest waned.

2004: The Urban Redevelopment Authority provided incentives to building owners to build underground walkways. But developers were largely not enticed, citing high costs, among other concerns.

2007: A tie-up between the Singapore Tourism Board and Orchard Road Business Association to encourage late-night shopping saw some malls and retailers open until 11pm on the last Friday of the month. It ended three years later amid declining participation.

2009: A \$40 million facelift involved the widening of pavements in front of Ion Orchard, Wisma Atria and Ngee Ann City and other improvements to the street.

2014: A monthly pedestrian night saw the stretch between Scotts and Bideford roads closed to traffic from 6pm to 11pm. It ended in 2016 as the costs were unsustainable and it did little to boost retail sales.

2017: Plans were announced to revitalise Orchard Road, including the possibility of reclaiming a lane of traffic to expand pedestrian spaces, the use of state land for ad hoc events and the building of a permanent structure to showcase local designers. The Grange Road open-air carpark has been used for several events, while Design Orchard opened last week.

2017: A Shibuya-style scramble crossing was trialled at the junction of Cairnhill and Orchard roads, allowing pedestrians to cross the road diagonally. The month-long trial took place on weekends and public holidays from December, but was not continued.

A previous six-month trial at the Bideford-Orchard junction took place 11 years earlier, producing similar results.

Speaker Tan's photo showcase raises \$600k for charity so far

Shabana Begum

Amid the photographs of scenic landscapes lay a serious appeal from Singapore's Speaker of Parliament Tan Chuan-Jin, who launched a fund-raising photo exhibition featuring his works at Far East Plaza yesterday.

Titled Our Place In The World, Mr Tan hopes to use the event, held in partnership with Hope Initiative Alliance, arts@work, Far East Organization and Far East Plaza, to raise money for the poor, disadvantaged and marginalised communities here.

All proceeds – \$600,000 has been raised so far – will go towards 13 partnering charities, including The Straits Times School Pocket Money Fund (STSPMF), Care Corner Singapore, Centre for Fathering, HealthServe and The Turning Point, among others.

The exhibition will be open to the public from today until Feb 28.

At a separate event, FairPrice announced it had donated \$38,000 to aid the beneficiaries of STSPMF.

Mr Tan, whose exhibition showcases images taken during his travels over the last 20 years in countries such as Japan, Bolivia and Spain, said: "I realise just how much we have in common as a human race around the world. We may all have different roots, different journeys, different homes. But we do share a common humanity that ties everyone together. We are different, yet the same."

At the launch, which also served



(From left) Parliament Speaker Tan Chuan-Jin with Hope Initiative Alliance's Reverend Ezekiel Tan and Emeritus Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong as they viewed Mr Tan Chuan-Jin's works at Far East Plaza yesterday. The money raised from the photo exhibition will go towards 13 partnering charities, including The Straits Times School Pocket Money Fund. ST PHOTO: TIMOTHY DAVID

to mark Singapore's bicentennial year – the 200th anniversary of Sir Stamford Raffles' arrival in Singapore in 1819 – Far East Organization also announced that it will set up the FEO-Grant SG 200 and donate \$2 million to it.

Some \$500,000 will subsidise

the organising of charitable events at Far East Plaza to commemorate the bicentennial. For the remaining \$1.5 million, the grant will match up to \$100,000 in funds raised for charities and voluntary welfare organisations (VWOs).

Far East Organization executive

director Dorothy Chan said: "To achieve a multiplier effect, we are working with the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth and SG Cares to invite other agencies and organisations to provide some form of matching sum so as to spur the fund-raising efforts of

the charities during the bicentennial commemoration."

Emeritus Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong, who was the guest of honour, noted: "The Government has done more to support social mobility and integration, and build a more inclusive society. But we in

the community – businesses, VWOs, private individuals – also have a responsibility to contribute.

"By stepping up to help those around us, we build a kinder, gentler, more gracious Singapore."

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Deferred HSR deal: KL informs S'pore of \$15m remittance

Payment is for abortive costs Republic incurred such as the breaking of contracts

Adrian Lim
Political Correspondent

Malaysia informed Singapore yesterday afternoon that it has remitted \$15 million as payment for the abortive costs the Republic incurred as a result of the Kuala Lumpur-Singapore High-Speed Rail (HSR) project being suspended.

Singapore's Ministry of Transport (MOT), in response to media queries, said yesterday it has received confirmation from the Malaysian government, through diplomatic correspondence, that the reimbursement has been made.

The amount was agreed last September when both countries inked a deal to suspend the HSR project for about two years, up to May 31, 2020. The reimbursement was to be made by the end of last month.

Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad had initially

wanted to scrap the HSR as part of a review of his country's mega projects, in a bid to trim a Rm1 trillion (\$S329 billion) national debt.

However, a deal was negotiated to suspend the project instead as a cancellation would have entailed a high amount of compensation under the HSR agreement signed between the two countries.

With the delay, the HSR express service will start running only on Jan 1, 2031, instead of Dec 31, 2026, as planned initially.

The 350km HSR link would cut travelling time between Kuala Lumpur and Singapore to 90 minutes, compared with more than four hours by car.

Transport Minister Khaw Boon Wan told Parliament last October that the abortive costs include contract breakage costs, which Singapore has to pay to contractors for terminating ongoing projects, and to wind down operations.

For ongoing excavation works, for example, the excavations must be back-filled for the site to be safe, and re-excavated when the project resumes, thus increasing costs, Mr Khaw said.

Up to the end of May last year, Singapore had spent more than \$250 million to implement the HSR project, which included costs for consultancies to design the civil infrastructure, costs for manpower and costs for land acquisition.

More than \$6 million in costs was incurred in June, another sum of more than \$6 million in July, and at least \$40 million is projected to have been spent from August to the end of last year.

Mr Khaw has said that Singapore can recover value for some of the expenditure, even if the HSR project does not proceed.

"But a significant amount which has been spent will be completely wasted expenditure if the project does not proceed," he told Parliament last July.

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The entrance of the ECRL project site in Bentong, Pahang. Despite the proposed huge discount, Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad's government decided to cancel the contract last month, sources say. PHOTO: THE STAR/ ASIA NEWS NETWORK

China offers to slash cost of ECRL by nearly half: Sources

KUALA LUMPUR • China has offered to nearly halve the cost of a US\$20 billion (\$S26.9 billion) rail project to save the centrepiece of its infrastructure push in South-east Asia, two sources said yesterday, but contradictory remarks by Malaysian ministers have left the outcome uncertain.

The conflicting statements made during the past week on the status of the East Coast Rail Link (ECRL) underscore the political and diplomatic challenges facing the government of Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad in renegotiating the contract.

"If it was just about the cost, China has offered a big reduction on the cost, as much as around half," said one of the sources privy to the talks.

Contractor China Communications Construction Company (CCCC) had offered to cut construction costs of RM67 billion (\$S22.2 billion) for the 688km project by as much as half, the sources said.

Expenses on interest and land acquisition help make up the rest of the total cost.

Despite the proposed discount, Tun Dr Mahathir's government decided to cancel the contract last month, said the sources, who asked not to be identified because of the sensitivity of the topic.

After coming to power last May, Dr Mahathir, a critic of China's investments in Malaysia, vowed to renegotiate or cancel what he calls "unfair" Chinese projects autho-

risied by his predecessor Najib Razak, and suspended the ECRL last July.

However, on Wednesday, Finance Minister Lim Guan Eng said that Malaysia was pursuing more talks with China.

That news came days after another minister said the Cabinet had decided to terminate the contract, and a day after Dr Mahathir sought China's understanding over the planned cancellation.

Negotiations have continued since the July suspension, with Malaysia indicating that it was looking for cheaper proposals on what would have been China's biggest Belt and Road venture in South-east Asia.

The sources also said that negotiations had been complicated by the involvement of too many Malaysian officials.

Apart from the Finance Ministry, CCCC and its domestic partner Malaysia Rail Line (MRL) have also had to present their proposals to Dr Mahathir's long-time adviser, Tun Daim Zainuddin, among other government officials.

"Each has his own agenda and looks at the project differently... it is a very peculiar situation," one of the sources said.

Mr Daim led the now-disbanded advisory council formed soon after Dr Mahathir came to power. His office declined to comment.

The Malaysian Finance Ministry directed queries to the Prime Min-

ister's Office, which did not immediately respond to questions. MRL and CCCC declined to comment.

In Beijing, Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said this week that he had seen reports of the cancellation but was unaware of the specifics.

"As far as I know, this project was agreed upon by companies from both sides in accordance with market principles based on equality, mutual benefit and consensus-building," he said.

"The Chinese and Malaysian sides have been in communication on the relevant matters."

He did not elaborate.

On Wednesday, the Malaysian Cabinet said it had decided to stop making comments on the project, save for those by Dr Mahathir.

Ties with China deteriorated after Dr Mahathir led a coalition of unlikely partners to victory over Najib's Barisan Nasional alliance that had governed the country for 60 years.

"It is not an easy task for a coalition of diverse parties with almost no experience in the federal government," said Mr Adib Zalkapli, Malaysia director of public policy consultancy Bower Group Asia.

"And each of the parties may have different ideas about foreign policy in the 'new Malaysia'."

The rail project was launched in 2017 in a push for Chinese investment during the administration of Najib, whose near-decade-long rule ended amid a massive financial scandal. Hit by ballooning costs, lack of transparency and the risk that it could saddle Malaysia with massive debt, the project has come to symbolise Najib's scandal-ridden administration.

At the time, the then opposition, which included Dr Mahathir, accused Najib of selling out Malaysia's sovereignty to China. REUTERS

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WORLD



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The Sultan of Pahang, Sultan Abdullah Ri'ayatuddin, being greeted by VIPs and well-wishers at a military airport in Kuantan, Pahang, before leaving for the official oath-taking ceremony in Kuala Lumpur. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

Malaysia crowns Sultan Abdullah as 16th King

Sultan of Pahang takes oath in grand ceremony at Istana Negara

KUALA LUMPUR • The Sultan of Pahang, Sultan Abdullah Ri'ayatuddin, was yesterday officially sworn in as Malaysia's 16th King in a traditional ceremony.

Sultan Abdullah, 59, ascended the throne by taking his oath and signing the instruments of office before Malaysia's Conference of Rulers, comprising nine rulers of the Malay-majority states and the four governors of the remaining states with no hereditary royal houses.

The constitutional monarch, who is Sultan of Pahang, will reign for five years as Malaysia's King in a unique rotation system involving the nine Malay rulers.

The nine rulers elect the king among themselves based on a strict order of rotation that has been in place since 1957, when the country achieved independence from the United Kingdom.

Sultan Abdullah became next in line to the national throne just one week prior to his election, after he was named the ruler of Pahang on Jan 15, replacing his ailing father, Sultan Ahmad, 88.

The previous monarch, Sultan Muhammad V of Kelantan, 49, stepped down unexpectedly on Jan 6, just two years through his term in an unprecedented abdication, following reports of his marriage to a Russian beauty queen.

The Kelantan sultan was the only

ruler who was not present at the ceremony yesterday.

The ceremony was held at the gold-themed throne room of Istana Negara, the national palace in Kuala Lumpur, with Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad and the Cabinet present in full regalia.

While the King's position is largely ceremonial, he holds special discretionary powers, including swearing in the prime minister and pardoning convicts.

On Monday, the government convened a tribunal to probe former election commissioners. It will present recommendations to the King, based on the findings.

Earlier yesterday, Sultan Abdullah and his wife, Tunku Azizah Aminah Maimunah Iskandariah Sultan Iskandar, arrived at the Malaysian Parliament after flying in from his home state of Pahang.

He was welcomed by Tun Dr Mahathir and his wife Siti Hasmah Mohamad Ali, Deputy Prime Minister Wan Azizah Wan Ismail and her husband Anwar Ibrahim, as well as other ministers and their deputies.

The constitutional monarch, who is Sultan of Pahang, will reign for five years as Malaysia's King in a unique rotation system involving the nine Malay rulers.



Sultan Abdullah and Tunku Azizah Aminah were ushered to the stage at the square.

The ruler received a 21-gun salute with the national anthem playing in the background.

He was also given the royal salute by the Royal Malay Regiment Central Band. He later inspected a guard-of-honour mounted by four officers and 103 members from the First Battalion Royal Malay Regiment.

The Federal Territories Mufti Zulkifli Mohamad Al-Bakri then performed a prayer recital.

Shortly after this, the royal couple left for the national palace. Sultan Abdullah is a keen athlete who plays polo and holds positions in several sporting bodies.

He is a member of the council of world football governing body Fifa, president of the Asian Hockey Association and a former head of the Football Association of Malaysia.

Tunku Azizah Aminah, 58, is the younger sister of the Johor ruler, Sultan Ibrahim Sultan Iskandar.

Yesterday, the ruler of Perak, Sultan Nazrin Shah, 62, took his oath of office as the deputy King.

BLOOMBERG, THE STAR/
ASIA NEWS NETWORK

Singapore leaders congratulate new King

President Halimah Yacob and Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong have written to the Sultan of Pahang, Sultan Abdullah Ri'ayatuddin, to congratulate him on his ascension to the throne as Malaysia's new King yesterday.

Sultan Abdullah was crowned the country's 16th King after taking the oath of office at the national palace in Kuala Lumpur in a ceremony that was steeped in tradition and attended by Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad.

In her letter, Madam Halimah extended her "warmest congratulations" to Sultan Abdullah, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement. "Your Majesty is widely respected for your generosity and concern for the welfare of Malaysians from all walks of life. I am confident that under Your Majesty's leadership, Malaysia will continue to enjoy prosperity and progress," she wrote.

"Singapore and Malaysia enjoy a longstanding history of friendship and cooperation, underpinned by strong bonds between

our peoples. I look forward to working closely with Your Majesty to further strengthen bilateral ties between our two countries," she said. She also took the opportunity to wish Sultan Abdullah and his wife, Tunku Azizah Aminah Maimunah Iskandariah Sultan Iskandar, good health and happiness.

Writing to congratulate Sultan Abdullah, PM Lee said: "With Your Majesty's wisdom and grace, I am confident that Malaysia will reach even greater heights of progress and success."

Mr Lee said Malaysia and Singapore shared a long and unique history built on close people-to-people ties and mutually beneficial cooperation across many sectors. He added that the two neighbours also worked well in regional and international fora.

"I am confident that our bilateral ties will strengthen further during Your Majesty's reign," he said, adding that he and his wife Ho Ching sent their respects and best wishes to the new King.

Sultan Abdullah Ri'ayatuddin, (seated, fourth from left) signing a document before Malaysia's Conference of Rulers, comprising the nine rulers of the Malay-majority states and the four governors of the remaining states with no hereditary royal houses. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

The Edge’s chairman gifts \$2.7m to IMDB whistle-blower



Mr Xavier Andre Justo’s 90GB of data contained in a hard drive helped to blow the lid off the IMDB case.

KUALA LUMPUR • The chairman of Malaysia’s The Edge Media Group, Datuk Tong Kooi Ong, said he has gifted US\$2 million (S\$2.7 million) to Swiss whistle-blower Xavier Andre Justo for his help in exposing the IMDB financial scandal, according to the business daily yesterday.

The Edge said in a report that Mr Justo, his wife Laura and four-year-old son Zander, yesterday visited the group’s office in Petaling Jaya, Selangor, where they met Mr Tong as well as group publisher and chief executive Ho Kay Tat.

“The gift to Justo is in appreciation of his contribution to Malaysia in helping to expose the kleptocracy of the past government,” Mr Tong was quoted as saying by The Edge. “Without him, the wrongdoings involving IMDB, as exposed by The Edge, would not have come to light.”

Mr Justo’s 90GB of data contained in a hard drive helped to blow the lid off the IMDB case, as it had details from e-mails and documents on what went on behind the scenes.

Mr Justo, 52, was an IT head at the London office of PetroSaudi, which ran an energy joint venture with IMDB from 2009 to 2012.

The United States Department of Justice had said US\$4.5 billion was siphoned off by top Malaysian officials and their associates from IMDB, which was set up in 2009.

Voter anger over the alleged corruption involving IMDB and other graft cases played a major role in the toppling of the long-ruling Barisan Nasional government in the general election last May.

Former Malaysian prime minister and finance minister Najib Razak has since been slapped with 42 corruption and money-laundering charges, mostly tied to IMDB, by the Pakatan Harapan government.

The whistle-blower is considered a hero by many Malaysians for helping to expose the IMDB case.

Mr Justo, who was jailed for three years in Thailand, told The Edge: “I take comfort that I have not suffered in vain. Malaysians got to learn the truth and I eventually got my freedom back.”



Chinese Vice-Premier Liu He (left), central bank governor Yi Gang (second from left) and members of a high-level trade delegation from China in discussions on Wednesday with US government ministers in Washington. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

No final trade deal until I meet Xi: Trump

US-Sino talks ‘going well’, but deal to be made only after leaders agree on ‘more difficult points’

WASHINGTON • President Donald Trump said negotiations are going well on the last day of high-level trade talks between the United States and China, but that no deal will be final until he meets Chinese President Xi Jinping.

“Meetings are going well with good intent and spirit on both sides,” he said in a series of morning tweets yesterday.

“No final deal will be made until my friend President Xi, and I, meet in the near future to discuss and agree on some of the longstanding and more difficult points.”

A trade delegation led by Chinese Vice-Premier Liu He – Mr Xi’s economic czar who is holding talks with Mr Trump’s ministers in Washington this week – has proposed to the US that Mr Trump meet Mr Xi in the tropical Chinese city of Hainan after his planned summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un late this month, the Wall Street Journal reported, citing people briefed on the matter.

The White House did not immedi-

ately comment on the report.

US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer was to lead a second day of negotiations yesterday with Mr Liu, the highest-level talks since Mr Trump met Mr Xi on Dec 1 and declared a 90-day truce aimed at reaching a lasting deal to end the trade war.

Mr Trump was scheduled to meet Mr Liu later yesterday.

The US President said in his tweets that he and China’s trade representatives are trying to “do a complete deal, leaving NOTHING unresolved on the table”.

But he later warned that a trade deal with China would be unaccept-

GOOD INTENT AND SPIRIT

Meetings are going well with good intent and spirit on both sides... No final deal will be made until my friend President Xi, and I, meet in the near future to discuss and agree on some of the longstanding and more difficult points.



U.S. PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP, addressing the status of the trade talks in a series of morning tweets yesterday.

able unless Beijing opened its markets to US financial services, manufacturing, agriculture and other industries.

“Without this (China opening its markets) a deal would be unacceptable!”

The White House has said a concluding statement will be released after this week’s talks, outlining progress made on core issues such as Chinese technology transfers and intellectual property practices, market access and Beijing’s pledge to buy more American goods.

Mr Trump’s tweets yesterday were the clearest articulation he has given so far of his desire for a deal to resolve his trade war with China before a March 1 deadline when tariffs on US\$200 billion (S\$269 billion) in Chinese imports are set to more than double.

That bold declaration is at odds with the consensus view of analysts and many in the business community, who argue that extracting meaningful concessions from China will take time and could potentially require years to verify.

This week’s talks began two days after the US charged Chinese telecommunications company Huawei Technologies and its chief financial officer, Meng Wanzhou, with conspiring to violate US sanctions on Iran by doing business through a subsidiary it tried to hide.

BLOOMBERG, REUTERS

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China taps tech to ease crush of annual CNY migration

Robots, biometrics help provide millions a less stressful trip home

Lim Yan Liang
China Correspondent
In Beijing

With the world's biggest human migration once again in full swing, China is counting on high-technology tools such as biometrics and autonomous robots to ease the travel crush.

The country's annual Chinese New Year exodus sees millions of people return to their home towns for family reunions, with this year's edition to usher in the Year of the Pig having started last week. It pushes the country's transport system to the limit.

Nearly three billion trips will be made during the 40-day Spring Festival travel rush that began on Jan 21 and ends on March 1, according to the authorities – a 0.6 per cent rise from last year. By Sunday, more than 10.4 million train trips had already been taken, a 17 per cent increase from last year, officials said.

Yet, travellers like Mr Jia Ning, 28, told The Straits Times that returning home this year has been less stressful than before.

"At Beijing West Railway Station, I tapped my identity card, a camera scanned my face and I was cleared," said the post-doctoral student, who returned home to Taiyuan city in Shanxi province last weekend. "Getting home is really convenient now,

especially by high-speed rail."

Virtually all major cities – and even some smaller ones – have rolled out such facial recognition systems ahead of the travel rush, cutting clearance times to as little as three seconds, said officials.

The capital has added over 300 self-service ID check gates across its three major railway stations, said the Beijing Railway Bureau.

At Shenyang North Railway Station, fresh upgrades mean the main entrance now has three times as many self-service gates as manual ones, assistant station master Gao Song told Shenyang Daily.

Railway stations, such as those in Guangdong province, have also rolled out ticketless payment by working with tech giant Alibaba.

Instead of joining queues to collect paper stubs, passengers get QR codes that work as e-tickets sent to their smartphones. "I was expecting the usual crowds, but all this new technology has made my trip home less stressful," said university lecturer He Xiaoyuan, 32, who took the high-speed rail home from Beijing to Henan province.

Such "paperless" travel has also been rolled out in 229 airports across the country, said the Civil Aviation Administration of China.

Inside the travel hubs, passengers are greeted by free-roaming robots dispensing bottled water or travel information, while security robots accompany police officers on patrols.

Transport operators and travel service providers are also using big data and artificial intelligence (AI) to improve efficiency and planning



Above: Policemen patrolling with a security robot at a railway station in Shenzhen last week.



Left: A woman having her face scanned by a ticket machine at a railway station in Guangzhou on Sunday. PHOTOS: REUTERS, EPA-EFE

behind the scenes.

China Railway, for instance, has used ticketing information to optimise train routes based on their popularity levels, reported CGTN. Cities with the most outbound train traffic are Guangzhou, Shanghai and Beijing, while the provinces of Hunan, Hubei and Henan are expected to receive the most inbound travellers.

Ctrip, China's largest online travel agency, has rolled out an AI-powered customer service robot to assist its army of 10,000 customer service officers mobilised to answer customers' questions during the Spring Festival period. Ctrip said the self-learning robot already handles over 70 per cent of customers' online queries, and is expected to have served 100 million customers by the end of the travel rush.

But some travellers said all this technology cannot replace the human touch.

Housewife Zhou Li, 43, who took a 17-hour train ride to her ancestral home in Qiqihar city in Heilongjiang province from Dalian, said she was thankful there were more volunteers this year at the ticket inspection gates, which helped to ensure smooth passenger flow.

"There are still a lot of rural folk who do not understand automatic ticket checking, which causes delays especially because of the big crowds. More staff may not be an 'intelligent' or new approach, but they are still important," she said.

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• Additional reporting by Lina Miao

N. Korean fishing rights sales 'violated sanctions'

NEW YORK • North Korea has sold fishing rights to Chinese fishery operators in violation of United Nations sanctions on Pyongyang, according to an upcoming annual report by a UN Security Council expert panel.

North Korea has used the sale of fishing rights as an important means of acquiring foreign currency, the report says. In some cases, Chinese fishing boats flew the North's national flag in an attempt to disguise themselves.

The panel is tasked with monitoring the implementation of UN sanctions against the North. Every March, it publishes a report that calls attention to the North's bid to skirt sanctions.

The panel's previous reports have found North Korea violated sanctions in its exports of coal, imports of refined petroleum and assistance to Syria, a nation suspected of chemical arms use.

From January to November last year, more than 15 Chinese fishing ships operating in the Sea of Japan/East Sea, the East China Sea and elsewhere were confirmed to possess North Korean fishing licences, according to information in the report provided by two UN member states.

Through testimony obtained from Chinese fishery operators, the panel learnt that about 200 Chinese fishing boats are operating in waters around North Korea, and that fishing licences are sold for about 810,000 yen (\$810,023) per month.

The testimony has also shed light on the practice of Chinese fishery operators purchasing licences through intermediaries. Some Chinese vessels carried the North Korean national flag in an attempt to pass themselves off as ships from the North.

North Korea is said to have begun selling fishing rights several years ago.

In August 2017, the Security Council adopted a resolution imposing a total ban on North Korean exports of marine products, stating the sale of fishing rights was a measure to obtain foreign currency. Another resolution adopted that December confirmed the sale of fishing rights falls under exports of marine products, making clear such sales are the target of sanctions.

In response to an inquiry about Chinese fishing boats holding North Korean fishing rights, the Chinese government told the panel that it quickly issued the required notice after the council adopted the resolution to ban the sale of fishing rights, according to the report.

Beijing also said Chinese corporations have stopped purchasing fishing rights from the North, the report added.

Meanwhile, South Korea's National Intelligence Service reported to the legislature in 2016 that the North had sold fishing rights to about 1,500 Chinese fishing boats that year, a three-fold increase from the average year, adding that the country had earned about US\$30 million (\$40.4 million) from the sales.

The Japanese government is also aware of the situation. In a speech before a ministerial-level meeting of the UN Security Council last September, Foreign Minister Taro Kono cited the sale of fishing rights as an example of cunning attempts by the North to evade UN sanctions.

YOMIURI SHIMBUN/
ASIA NEWS NETWORK



Passengers waiting to board their trains at Hangzhou East Railway Station in Zhejiang province on Wednesday, ahead of Chinese New Year next week. Nearly three billion trips will be made during the 40-day travel rush that began on Jan 21 and ends on March 1, according to the authorities. By Sunday, more than 10.4 million train trips had already been taken, a 17 per cent increase from last year. PHOTO: REUTERS

US, China take the lead in race for artificial intelligence: UN study

GENEVA • China and the United States are ahead of the global competition to dominate artificial intelligence (AI), according to a study by the UN World Intellectual Property Organisation (Wipo) published yesterday.

The study found US tech giant IBM had by far the biggest AI patent portfolio, with 8,920 patents, ahead of Microsoft with 5,930 and a group of mainly Japanese tech conglomerates.

China accounted for 17 of the top

20 academic institutions involved in patenting AI and was particularly strong in the fast-growing area of "deep learning", a machine-learning technique that includes speech recognition systems.

"The US and China obviously have stolen a lead. They're out in front in this area, in terms of numbers of applications, and in scientific publications," Wipo director-general Francis Gurry told a news conference.

US President Donald Trump has

accused China of stealing American innovations and technology and has slapped trade tariffs on more than US\$230 billion (\$310 billion) of Chinese goods to punish Beijing.

China said in December it resolutely opposed "slandering" accusations from the US and its allies criticising the Asian giant for economic espionage and stealing intellectual property and company secrets.

Mr Gurry acknowledged there were accusations about China's behaviour but there was no doubt it

had embraced the global intellectual property system, with the world's largest patent office and the largest number of domestic patent applications.

"They are serious players in the field of intellectual property," he said.

The Wipo study analysed international patent filings, scientific publications, litigation filings and acquisition activity, and found that there had been as many patent applications for AI since 2013 as in the half

century since the term was coined in the 1950s.

Patent applications in machine learning, which includes techniques used by ride-sharing services to minimise detours, averaged annual growth of 28 per cent between 2013 and 2016, the last year for which data is available, because of an 18-month period before confidential applications are publicly disclosed.

Much of that growth came from deep learning, which overtook ro-

botics as it ballooned from 118 patent applications in 2013 to 2,399 in 2016.

The single most popular AI application was computer vision, used in self-driving cars, and mentioned in 49 per cent of all AI-related patents.

The study showed how technology had followed science, Mr Gurry said, with the 2013 boom in technological applications coming 10 years after a similar surge in scientific publications.

REUTERS

Bangkok governor appeals for help to battle toxic smog

Thai PM orders army to check factories; social media users mock use of drones

BANGKOK • Bangkok's governor yesterday appealed for help to battle the toxic smog shrouding the capital as the deployment of drones left Bangkok residents unimpressed.

The city has been blanketed in a murky haze for weeks, inciting criticism from the public over the government's response, which has veered from playing down the problem to abruptly shutting schools.

The authorities have seeded clouds to stimulate rain, sprayed overpasses with water to catch micro-pollutants, and even urged people not to burn incense ahead of Chinese New Year.

Troops have also been asked to inspect factories across the country.

Drones dispersed water yesterday to help clear the air of the harmful microscopic particles known as PM2.5 – a tactic that drew scepticism and derision from Thai social media users.

Bangkok governor Aswin Kwanmuang compounded the sense of frustration by calling on "all sectors" to find a solution.

"I don't know everything, so I'm inviting everyone to help," he said, in response to questions from reporters about the effectiveness of the drones. "If we do nothing, people will criticise us for not taking any action."

His plea comes a day after he declared Bangkok a "control area", closing hundreds of schools until today and announcing a ban on cars that use diesel and burning of any kind within the city.

Violators run the risk of three-month jail sentences and fines.

The lingering pall is due to exhaust fumes from traffic, the burning of dead crops, and pollution from factories getting trapped in the city.

Prime Minister Prayut Chan-ocha on Wednesday stepped up rhetoric, appealing to Bangkok residents to carpool and for the army to "check" factories in all 76 provinces.

Bangkok's dangerous air pollution makes it vital for the government to take "decisive action", said UN Environment's regional coordinator for chemicals, waste and air quality, Ms Kakuko Nagatani-Yoshida.



Drones used by the Bangkok authorities yesterday to disperse water to help clear the air of the harmful microscopic particles known as PM2.5. The move drew scepticism and derision from Thai social media users. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

She said a short-term solution would be to shut down the most severe factory polluters, but that ultimately "factories will have to convert to cleaner technology and

open burning of waste must be stopped".

The authorities remain tense over growing gripes about the haze and the government's risible re-

sponse, which has started to cloud political debate and worry officials about its impact on tourism during the high season.

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WorldBriefs

Air strike launched after church blasts

MANILA • The Philippine military launched an air strike against a local terrorist group suspected to be behind a deadly attack on a Catholic church on the southern island of Mindanao on Sunday. The authorities have intensified operations against a splinter group from the Abu Sayyaf in the southern province of Sulu including an air strike in parts of Jolo town on Tuesday. BLOOMBERG

Muslims demand Nike recall sneakers

JAKARTA • Muslims have lambasted Nike for selling a brand of Air Max sneakers with a design on its sole that resembles the Arabic word for "Allah". The sports giant is being asked to recall the sneakers. THE JAKARTA POST/ASIA NEWS NETWORK

No progress on nuclear treaty talks: Russia

MOSCOW • Moscow and Washington have made "no progress" in talks on saving a key arms control treaty, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said yesterday, with the United States expected to begin withdrawal this weekend. Russian and US officials had met to discuss the fate of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces treaty. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



India's Congress party president Rahul Gandhi (left) with his sister Priyanka Gandhi and her husband Robert Vadra at a memorial ceremony for former Indian prime minister Rajiv Gandhi in New Delhi last May. Ms Gandhi is due to hold her first press conference with her brother next Monday in Lucknow, as election campaigning heats up. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Asia watch

Homecoming, budgets, new stars and more

Shefali Rekhi
Asia News Network Editor

Festive February is here, with Chinese New Year due to be celebrated in a number of countries. Several announcements have been lined up, meetings have been planned and budgets are to be delivered, among other events. Together, these will make the shortest month of the year as interesting as any other.

See what's coming up:

Modi's budget before elections

India's interim Finance Minister Piyush Goyal is due to deliver the interim budget for this year today. This comes as India heads to general elections in a few weeks, raising expectations that there could be new benefits for farmers and the country's middle class.

Celebrating the Year of the Pig

Hundreds of thousands of people in the major cities of China, such as Beijing and Shanghai, will head home for Chinese New Year from this week.

After the week-long celebrations, they will begin to return to their cities of work from Feb 10. China's top planning body, the National Development and Reform Commission, estimates that about 2.99 billion trips will be made during the Spring Festival.

China and Japan discuss security issues

Senior foreign affairs and defence officials from China and Japan are to meet today in Beijing, Japanese media has reported. The meeting, the first since October 2017, follows Japan's approval last month of new defence guidelines that will see Tokyo pursuing plans to deploy aircraft carriers for the first time since World War II.

Both countries will also be doing groundwork to make it possible for Chinese President Xi Jinping to visit Japan in June, for the Group of 20 summit in Osaka.

Merkel visits Japan

German Chancellor Angela Merkel is set to arrive in Japan next Monday for a two-day visit.

She is expected to take up free trade and global issues with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. It will be her fifth visit to the country since 2005.

Unveiling Priyanka Gandhi

Smart, charismatic Priyanka Gandhi is due to hold her first press conference with her brother and Congress party president Rahul Gandhi next Monday in Lucknow, as election campaigning in India heats up, the Times of India has reported.

This will be followed by a public rally on Feb 10 to formally introduce her to voters in Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous state.

Trump's State of the Union address

United States President Donald Trump will make his State of the Union address next Tuesday. This gives him a chance to spell out his national agenda for the year and it comes as his government's popularity ratings are running low.

While several thousand federal workers have returned to work after a 35-day partial government shutdown, the government has until Feb 15 to resolve the disagreement over funding for a border wall and avoid another shutdown.

Autonomy vote in the Philippines

A referendum is due next Wednesday in provinces adjacent to Bangsamoro (nation of Moros) in the Philippines to ask people if they would like to join the area, which will have more autonomy in deciding on investments in infrastructure, schools, healthcare and social welfare for its people. Nearly five million people reside in the area.

Singaporean of the Year

Every nation has its stars. Who will be crowned Singapore's star for the past year? Watch this space as The Straits Times announces the Singaporean of the Year on Feb 12.

Najib's trial

The first of four trials of former Malaysian prime minister Najib Razak begins on Feb 12. He faces a total of 42 charges so far.

He has been accused of money laundering and receiving the proceeds of illegal activities in his bank accounts.

Wedding bells for Ahok

Former Jakarta governor Basuki "Ahok" Tjahaja Purnama is due to marry his 21-year-old girlfriend Puput Nastiti Devi, a former police-woman. Reports say the wedding will likely take place on Feb 15.

2nd Indonesian election debate

Indonesia's presidential candidates – President Joko Widodo, who is seeking a second term; and Mr Prabowo Subianto – will face off in

a second debate, due to be held on Feb 17.

The topics this time will be energy, food, natural resources, the environment and infrastructure. And for this round, the candidates will not be provided with questions beforehand.

Singapore's Budget 2019

Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat is due to deliver this year's budget on Feb 18. Education, healthcare, defence and security will be some of the focus areas this year.

Mikhy Brochez in court

US citizen Mikhy Farrera Brochez, who allegedly leaked online the records of 14,200 people from Singapore's HIV registry, has been arrested and charged with trespass in the US state of Kentucky.

He is due to appear before the district court in Clark County, Kentucky, on Feb 18.

Huawei battles technology theft charges

China's largest technology firm, Huawei Technologies, and its US affiliate have been ordered to appear in federal court in Seattle on Feb 28 to face charges that the company engaged in a scheme to steal trade secrets of T-Mobile US, Bloomberg has reported.

2nd Trump-Kim summit?

Will US President Donald Trump meet North Korean leader Kim Jong Un this month? The White House has announced that it is a possibility and that it could take place towards the end of this month.

The announcement follows a visit by North Korean envoy Kim Yong Chol to Washington last month. Pyongyang wants the easing of American sanctions, while Washington is keen to see concrete steps by North Korea to denuclearise. Vietnam is a likely venue for the meeting.

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• Asia Watch is a monthly feature on happenings around the world of interest to the region, published in The Straits Times on the first weekday of the month.

Plans to relocate crocs near world's tallest statue trigger concern

Nirmala Ganapathy
India bureau chief
In New Delhi

A plan to relocate crocodiles near the Statue of Unity, the world's tallest statue, has enraged environmentalists and raised concerns for the safety of the endangered animals.

Forest authorities have started capturing crocodiles from two ponds adjacent to the 182m statue of India's first deputy prime minister and Independence Day leader Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, in Gujarat.

The two ponds have been artificially created to stabilise the water released from the Sardar Sarovar Dam before it reaches the entry point of the main Narmada canal.

The authorities said they had yet to come up with relocation plans, even though around 12 crocodiles have so far been captured in cages left on the sides of the pond. They are being held at a rescue centre in Narmada. "The Statue of Unity attracts a lot of tourists. They shouldn't have any life threats," said Ms Aradhana Sahu, conservator of forests (Vadodara Wildlife Circle).

"We have not been given a target (on the number of crocodiles to capture). Basically, they should not be a threat to human life. We are working out the plans for relocation."

According to forest department estimates, there are more than 300 crocodiles in the ponds. Some Indian media reports suggest that the crocodiles are being cleared for a plan to launch seaplane services to the area, but Ms Sahu denied this.

The Statue of Unity is dedicated to a politician known as the "Iron Man" of India. He oversaw the merger of small princely states into India and was vital in uniting the country.

The statue was commissioned by Prime Minister Narendra Modi when he was chief minister in 2010 and is built on a river island facing the Sardar Sarovar Dam on the Narmada river. The nearest town is Kevadia 3.5km away, which is accessible by road. Since the Statue of Unity was unveiled on Oct 31 last year, almost 280,000 people had visited by the start of January, according to Gujarat government figures.

Environmentalists say the plan to relocate the crocodiles was poorly conceived and goes against the spirit of the wildlife Act.

"If you have this many crocodiles in the pond, it means the habitat is viable and they are thriving. Why do you want to take it away?" said environmental lawyer Ritwick Dutta.

"Along with the government promoting a Statue of Unity, you have biodiversity at the same time. Tourists can come and see the reptiles. It can be promoted as national unity and wildlife, rather than shifting them out."

The crocodiles living in the ponds are known as mugger crocodiles, which are broad-snouted. They are extinct in Bhutan and Myanmar, and listed as vulnerable on the International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List, an inventory of the conservation status of plants and animals.

In India, they are protected under Schedule I – the highest degree of protection under the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972. They are found in different parts of the country in freshwater lakes and rivers.

There have been a few crocodile attacks in the Narmada River. In 2017, a village woman was bathing in the river when she was dragged into the water by a crocodile. But environmentalists said such instances are unusual.

"A wild animal's population establishes with the availability of food and chances of reproduction... a proper study is required to be carried out for both existing and new localities," said Dr Jitendra Gavali, director of the Community Science Centre in Vadodara. "Do they get required bank area for basking? For nesting? And what about the rest... will they be shifted? (This is) making the poor animals (become) refugees in their own territory."

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Hindu priest sets date for temple construction on mosque ruins

PRAYAGRAJ (India) • A powerful Hindu priest has said he would lead a group of followers to start building a Hindu temple on the ruins of a 16th-century mosque, which could violate a court order and raise religious tensions in an election year.

A Hindu mob levelled the mosque in 1992, sparking communal riots that killed about 2,000 people across India.

The site, in the northern town of Ayodhya, has been the focus of dispute between majority Hindus and minority Muslims for many years.

Hindu groups believe the site to be the birthplace of Lord Ram, one of the religion's most revered deities.

They also point to evidence there was a temple at the site before the mosque was built in 1528.

The place where the Babri Mosque once stood is now under

court control, guarded by armed state and federal police.

"We'll lay the foundation stone there on Feb 21," Swami Swaroopanand Saraswati said on Wednesday at the world's biggest religious gathering, Kumbh Mela, in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh where Ayodhya is located.

But Mr Zafaryab Jilani, a secretary of the All-India Muslim Personal Law Board and an advocate in the mosque case, said his community would not be provoked by such calls to disturb the status quo and that any attempt to breach the site would amount to contempt of court.

Mr Saraswati's aides said they were ready to be arrested if their attempts are resisted.

His comments came a day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist government peti-



tioned the Supreme Court to return land around the site seized by various court orders over the years.

Building the temple is a key demand of the conservative Hindu al-

lies of Mr Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party and has gained fresh impetus ahead of a general election due by May.

REUTERS

A model of the proposed Hindu temple to be built on the ruins of a mosque that was levelled by a mob in 1992, which sparked riots that killed about 2,000. The site is now under court control and guarded by armed police. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



Crocodiles are being captured from the ponds near the 182m statue of India's Independence Day leader Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



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Cool way to make music



When Mr Tim Linhart started making instruments from ice, they were more likely to explode with a bang than produce music – but things have come a long way since then.

Today, the 59-year-old United States-born artist is in charge of an ice orchestra of local musicians playing a series of concerts at sub-zero temperatures in a vast, custom-built igloo high in the Italian Alps.

In the Passo Paradiso winter sports station at an altitude of 2,600m, instruments at times spontaneously implode due to the brittleness of the ice, but less frequently now.

The artist has built a violin, viola, a timpani set, xylophone, double bass, mandolin, cello and even his own invention – the giant Rolandophone – a percussion pipe instrument, all from ice.

After moulding front and back plates, Mr Linhart uses a mix of water and snow to build the instrument's walls, around a metal backbone, over which the strings are stretched and tightened.

PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

EU may impose 5G ‘ban’ on Chinese firms

Proposals still at very early stages, but move marks shift in stance amid growing concerns

BRUSSELS/WARSAW • The European Union is considering proposals that would effectively amount to a de facto ban on Huawei Technologies equipment for next-generation

mobile networks, four senior EU officials said, adding to mounting pressure on the world's largest maker of telecommunications gear. While efforts by the EU's execu-

tive arm are still at the very early stages and could prove complicated to implement, the move marks a shift in the EU's stance amid growing security concerns in the West about China.

A move to exclude Chinese firms such as Huawei would likely be welcomed by the United States, which has been trying to prevent Ameri-

can firms from buying Huawei infrastructure equipment and has been pressing allies to do the same. US security experts are concerned the gear could be used by China's government for espionage – a concern Huawei calls “unfounded”.

According to the four EU officials, one option being considered by the European Commission is to amend a 2016 cyber-security law, which requires businesses involved in critical infrastructure to take appropriate security measures.



Huawei's local offices in Warsaw, Poland. The European Union's tougher stance reflects growing security concerns in the West about Huawei. PHOTO: REUTERS

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It Changed My Life

‘I had to repeat Primary 6’

After that, I never failed again, says Changi Airport Group chairman Liew Mun Leong

By amending the definition of critical infrastructure to also include so-called fifth-generation mobile networks, the law would effectively prevent EU businesses from using such equipment provided by any country or company suspected of using the equipment for spying or sabotage, the officials said. Other changes could also be required or made, such as changes to procurement rules, the officials added.

The officials stressed that any changes were not about one company only and were prompted by broader national security concerns regarding China.

A Huawei spokesman said “Huawei is open and committed to work with European institutions to develop a cyber-security standard for Europe” and added that the company's opening of a new cyber-security centre in Brussels in March underlines its commitment to Europe.

“Huawei has a clean track record on cyber security,” the spokesman said. Huawei has denied accusations of spying and sabotage.

Beijing also denies any intention to spy on the West. China's Ambassador to the EU, Mr Zhang Ming, took a similar message to a private meeting at the Commission with EU tech commissioner Andrus Ansip on Tuesday, arguing that Huawei should not be blocked from 5G auctions in Europe, one of the four officials said.

European telecoms companies are preparing for the 5G technology

that promises to link up everything from vehicles to factories at far greater speeds.

The tougher stance reflects growing security concerns in the West about Huawei. Some Western countries, including the US and Australia, have restricted Huawei from accessing next-generation mobile networks and Germany is considering whether to do so.

If such measures were introduced by the EU, it could prove a setback for European efforts to stay competitive in 5G because it would likely lead to delays and extra costs in building networks.

Deutsche Telekom, Europe's largest telecoms operator, on Wednesday proposed a series of steps to ensure that Chinese vendors could take part in building Germany's 5G mobile networks without jeopardising national security.

Changing EU law is not straightforward and such an amendment would need to win approval from

EU capitals. Even with that approval, it could be a year or more before a change to the law was made.

Still, the Commission hopes that the process of changing the law would have a chilling effect on business conducted by European countries with Chinese telecoms equipment makers, according to one of the EU officials.

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang is also expected to raise objections to any EU “ban” on Chinese equipment with European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker and European Council President Donald Tusk at an annual summit in Brussels, which has been brought forward to April 9 at Beijing's request. EU-China summits usually take place in July.

But the EU has also insisted that Mr Li meet Mr Juncker and Mr Tusk in Brussels before he meets central and eastern European leaders in a separate summit later in April.

REUTERS

Second Apple engineer charged with theft of self-driving car data

SAN FRANCISCO • An Apple hardware engineer was charged by the United States with stealing the iPhone maker's driverless car secrets for a China-based company, the second such case since July amid an unprecedented crackdown by the Trump administration on Chinese corporate espionage.

Chen Jizhong was seen by a fellow Apple employee taking photographs on Jan 11 with a wide-angle lens inside a secure work space that houses the company's autonomous car project, about six months after he signed a strict confidentiality oath when he was hired, according to a criminal complaint in federal court in San Jose, California.

Prosecutors said Chen admitted to taking the photos and backing up some 2,000 files to his personal hard drive, including manuals and schematics for the project, but did not tell Apple he had applied for a job with a China-based autonomous vehicle company.

Apple said disclosure of the data taken by Chen would be “enormously damaging”, according to prosecutors.

Among the photos seized by the government is an image stamped Dec 19 diagramming Apple's autonomous driving architecture. Another from June last year depicts an assembly drawing of a wire harness for an autonomous vehicle.

Chen told Apple investigators he had taken the pictures to support applications for jobs within the company after supervisors tagged him with a performance improvement plan, according to the complaint.

But after Apple learnt that he was seeking employment with a Chinese rival, he was suspended.

The engineer later told Apple he had intended to travel to China to visit his ill father, but was arrested last week before he could board the flight. He was released from federal custody after posting US\$500,000 (S\$672,000) in cash and property on Jan 25.

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A man walking along the frozen lakefront in Chicago, Illinois. Officials warned about the risk of almost instant frostbite on what could be the city's coldest day, as Wednesday night's temperature was projected to dip to minus 31 deg C due to rare polar winds from the Arctic. Warming centres opened around the Midwest, while schools closed throughout the region. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Living in an age of extreme weather

From heatwave to cold snap, extreme weather likely the result of climate change: Experts

NEW YORK • In Chicago, officials warned about the risk of almost instant frostbite on what could be the city's coldest day ever. Warming centres opened around the Midwest. And schools and universities closed throughout the region as rare polar winds streamed down from the Arctic.

At the same time, on the other side of the planet, wildfires raged in Australia's record-breaking heat. Soaring air-conditioner use overloaded electrical grids and caused widespread power failures. The authorities slowed down trams and cancelled some to save power.

This is weather in the age of extremes. It comes on top of multiple extremes, of all kinds, in all kinds of places.

"When something happens –

whether it's a cold snap, a wildfire, a hurricane, any of those things – we need to think beyond what we have seen in the past and assume there's a high probability that it will be worse than anything we've ever seen," said Dr Crystal Kolden, an associate professor at the University of Idaho, who specialises in wildfires and who is working in Tasmania during one of the state's worst fire seasons.

Consider these recent examples: Heat records were toppled from Norway to Algeria last year. In Australia, a drought has gone on so long that a child in kindergarten will hardly have seen rain in her lifetime. And California saw its most ruinous wildfires ever last year, triggering a bankruptcy filing this week by the state's largest utility,



Over in Huon Valley, Tasmania, fire trucks are seen on Wednesday near property and vehicles damaged by bushfires. This year, heat has been a problem in both the Northern and Southern hemispheres. PHOTO: TASMANIA FIRE SERVICE/REUTERS

Pacific Gas and Electric.

Is it climate change? Heat and drought extremes are consistent with scientific consensus: More greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere bring a greater likelihood of abnormally high temperatures. Also, broadly speaking, scientists say, a hotter planet makes extreme weather more frequent and more intense. The real-life numbers bear out the climate models.

Concentrations of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere are higher than they have been in 800,000 years and average global temperatures have risen.

The last four years have been the

hottest on record, according to the World Meteorological Organisation, and the 20 warmest years on record have all come in the past 22 years.

Ocean temperatures have broken records in several straight years. As for the extremely low temperatures this week in parts of the United States, they stand in sharp contrast to the trend towards warmer winters. They may also be a result of warming, strangely enough.

Emerging research suggests that a warming Arctic is causing changes in the jet stream and pushing polar air down to latitudes that are unaccustomed to them.

Hence, this week's atypical chill

over large swathes of the US North-east and Midwest.

Take Chicago, for instance. It woke up to the hazards of heat over two decades ago, when a five-day heatwave in the summer of 1995 killed hundreds of people, particularly those who lived alone.

The city developed a heat action plan. It planted thousands of trees, set up neighbourhood cooling centres and created a text-messaging system so residents could request that city officials check on vulnerable people.

Now comes a cold spell that a generation of Chicago residents has never experienced, with Wednes-

HOT...

Chicago woke up to the hazards of heat over two decades ago, when a five-day heatwave in the summer of 1995 killed hundreds of people, particularly those who lived alone.

...AND COLD

Now comes a cold spell that a generation of Chicago residents has never experienced, with Wednesday night's temperature projected to dip to minus 31 deg C.

day night's temperature projected to dip to minus 31 deg C (the city's record low is minus 33 deg C, recorded in January 1985).

The city said it would send out five buses to cruise the streets as mobile-warming centres for homeless people. It has issued instructions on how to warm pipes so they do not freeze.

Extreme heat, though, is the bigger problem overall. Heat records have been broken twice as often as cold records in the US since the 2000s. One recent study in the journal PLOS Medicine projected a five-fold rise in heat-related deaths for the US by 2080.

The outlook for less wealthy countries is worse. For the Philippines, researchers forecast 12 times more deaths. Extreme heat is already devastating the health and livelihoods of tens of millions of people, especially in South Asia.

Extreme heat also affects the nutritional value of many crops. Even some of the most precious indulgences, like coffee, are in danger as temperatures rise.

This year, heat has been a problem in both the Northern and Southern hemispheres.

Mr Bob Henson, a meteorologist at Weather Underground, a forecasting service, said that in preparing for how climate change affects the weather, "we have to be prepared for a wider range of possibilities".

Some preparation is connected to resiliency. Mayors promise to make their cities more resilient to climate change after one disaster or another. Scientists experiment with crop seeds that are more resilient to the vagaries of extreme heat and drought.

Dr Kolden, the fire specialist, noted that as a species, humans pride themselves on being resilient. But that human trait can also have a downside.

It is why, often, even when officials tell people to evacuate from a fire zone or a flood plain, they do not. They think they will make it because they have made it before. Or that the forecasters are wrong.

"In our DNA, we've got this extreme resilience baked in," Dr Kolden said. "That ends up being our downfall when it comes to the changing conditions."

NYTIMES

Pope's visit comes as UAE faces scrutiny over image of tolerance

Mark Townsend
For The Straits Times
In Dubai

When Pope Francis arrives in Abu Dhabi on Sunday night, he will become the first head of the Roman Catholic Church to set foot in the Arabian Peninsula.

The pontiff's host – the United Arab Emirates (UAE) – hopes the optics from the historic visit will solidify its position as a major power on the global stage, at a time when UAE domestic and foreign policy faces increased scrutiny.

Still, the Pope's presence in the peninsula promises to be rich in symbolism for the roughly one million Catholics living in the UAE, many from the devoutly Catholic Philippines.

The visit takes place from Sunday to Tuesday. Its spiritual climax will be next Tuesday's papal Mass, expected to draw an estimated 120,000 faithful to a ticketed event at Zayed Sports City, 15km from the UAE capital Abu Dhabi.

The Pope's itinerary includes interfaith meetings with members of the Muslim Council of Elders at the Grand Mosque of Sheikh Zayed and a scheduled meeting with Sheikh Ahmed el-Tayeb, the grand imam of Al-Azhar, considered by some as the

highest authority in Sunni Islamic thought and Islamic jurisprudence.

According to the Vatican, Pope Francis has regarded relations between Christianity and Islam as a priority since the beginning of his papacy.

But the visit also has political objectives for both sides, says Ms Emily Hawthorne, Middle East and North Africa analyst at American geopolitical intelligence firm Stratfor. "Abu Dhabi is trying to appeal to the Catholic segment of its majority expatriate population as well as to the country's external allies, who appreciate the message of tolerance."

Meanwhile, the Vatican is trying to reach out to Catholic expatriates in poorly reached areas like the Arabian Peninsula, which helps bolster the Church's image, she adds.

The UAE, where the official religion is Islam and which is home to over 200 nationalities, has gone further than many of its Gulf counterparts in permitting Hindus, Christians and Jews places of worship.

Yet the freedom to worship granted to expatriates is part of a grand bargain – that foreigners should not interfere with UAE public policy or violate morals.

In pursuing its mission of benevolence, the UAE has appointed a minister for tolerance, declaring 2019 as the "Year of Tolerance".



Pope Francis meeting the faithful at the Vatican yesterday. His impending visit to the UAE is aimed at building bridges amid growing nationalism and insularism around the world, said its minister for tolerance. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

According to the minister, Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, the papal visit is aimed at building bridges amid growing nationalism and insularism around the world.

Even so, the UAE's carefully crafted image as a beacon of tolerance and openness belies a hawkish

domestic and foreign policy.

The country's de facto ruler, Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed, has steered the UAE on an increasingly assertive course, drawing a torrent of criticism from rights groups, including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.

Together with ally Saudi Arabia, the UAE is mired in a protracted conflict in Yemen which undermines UAE claims to forbearance, says Ms Hawthorne. "The UAE's increasingly public foreign policy risks negative blowback, especially when it comes to the UAE's involvement in

the ongoing war in Yemen – both (the UAE and Saudi) governments no doubt hope the Pope's visit is an example of cross-cultural engagement that will draw positive attention to the government's work to promote tolerance domestically."

It is unclear if the Pope will raise the subject of Yemen in his meeting with the Crown Prince, but the UAE recently accused the Houthis of violating the Sweden agreement struck last December, which declared a ceasefire in the port city of Hodeida in Yemen.

The UAE believes the Houthis are backed by Iran, which it considers as the region's biggest threat to stability, a view shared by Saudi Arabia.

In 2017, the UAE joined Bahrain, Egypt and Saudi Arabia in a blockade of neighbouring Qatar amid claims that Doha is a major supporter of the Muslim Brotherhood, which the UAE considers a terrorist group. Unease over the group's reach has also led to a clampdown on domestic dissent and jailing of activists.

Last year, the UAE jailed a British academic for life for allegedly spying for Britain's intelligence service MI6, before granting him a presidential pardon in November in an unprecedented spat with the country, a longstanding close ally.

mttowsend@yahoo.com

Foreign policy in an age of technological disruption

Amid the upheavals, Singapore must stay true to first principles if it is to prosper and remain independent, says Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan. Here is an adapted text of his speech at the Singapore Perspectives conference organised by the Institute of Policy Studies on Monday.

For Singapore to be successful, all Singaporeans need to be fully prepared to collectively face this age of disruption. This is why economic restructuring is a key priority for the Singapore Government... If we do not ride the technology wave, we will sink under it. But, if we succeed, we can navigate safely through our current digital Gilded Age into a new Golden Age.

We are witnessing a fractured world order due to fractious domestic politics, caused by digital disruption. The signs are obvious – strategic tension between the superpowers, political polarisation, anxiety over the future of jobs and anger over sharpening inequality.

There is a clear chain of causation. Technology drives human progress. Early masters of technology accumulate and wield disproportionate power. Hence, major technological breakthroughs always cause revolutionary economic shifts that disrupt society and politics, in turn, altering the global balance of power.

We have seen all this before. The Industrial Revolution in Great Britain transformed its agrarian society and economy. Demand for labour led to urbanisation as feudalism gave way to capitalism. But the exploitation of labour and vicissitudes of work created a backlash, which later gave rise to trade unions and the Welfare State.

At the same time, industrial Britain's search for raw materials and new markets saw trade expeditions dispatched, the navy strengthened and outposts established – as Singapore was exactly 200 years ago. Thus emerged an empire on which the sun never set, and a century of pre-eminence for Great Britain.

Henry Ford's moving assembly line created an accelerated cycle of mass consumption and mass production.

A new Gilded Age of increasing inequality emerged as capitalists consolidated their wealth. Across the globe, reactionary responses led to growing extremism – fascists on the right, and communists on the left. Economic rivalry and political miscalculations sowed the seeds for the world wars.

It was the United States, which, having outdone all other countries in technological advancement, emerged from World War II as a pre-eminent global superpower.

It generously launched the Marshall Plan for Europe and reconstruction of Japan. It set the rules and underwrote the post-war international order. The United Nations, the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, and World Trade Organisation were created. These formed the foundations of a rules-based multilateral system, which gave newly independent countries like Singapore a small seat at the table.

Globalisation in the post-war period was again driven by technological revolution.

WINNERS AND LOSERS

While the net impact of globalisation is positive – and Singapore has benefited profoundly – we should not overstate its benefits.

There have always been winners and losers, and many have felt left behind. Blue-collar workers in the West have seen wages stagnate, jobs migrate and inequality grow, and are increasingly aggrieved.



The Government is committed to improving the education system and upskilling schemes such as SkillsFuture, and will make appropriate adjustments to its social security system to give Singaporeans confidence to navigate these disruptive times, says Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan. ST PHOTO: CHONG JUN LIANG

Now, a new digital revolution is upon us – the rise of smart technology due to machine learning.

In 2016, Google's Alpha Go program beat the human professional Go player Lee Sedol without handicaps for the first time. This represented a quantum leap in artificial intelligence. Go, unlike chess or Sudoku, has more combinations of moves than there are atoms in the universe, and it cannot be solved via standard rules-based programming.

We find ourselves in a new digital Gilded Age.

The winners are supranational tech companies like Google, Amazon, Apple and Facebook, with rapidly growing economic and political influence. The losers are those unable to skill up and who have lost jobs because of disruptive technology.

The pace of change is accelerating. New jobs will be created, but not fast enough to replace the old, exacerbating the scale and severity of dislocation.

Machine-learning and pattern-recognition technology enables machines to see, listen and speak, and could soon make many middle-class white-collar jobs redundant. Already, we are seeing a breakdown of domestic consensus and increasing political polarisation.

This has profound effects for the strategic landscape. The US-China relationship was previously mutually beneficial and interdependent. But their relations are now shifting from engagement to strategic rivalry. Why?

THE FIGHT OVER DATA

While countries used to compete

over land and capital, the fight is now over data. In this technological contest, the stakes are higher than before – because, in the digital arena, global markets are consolidated, and the “winner takes all”.

We see this contest in the race among the major powers to become the world leader in 5G networks. So, even if the US and China manage to settle their trade disputes, it will no longer be business as usual.

Because of the pervasiveness of technology, we expect a strategic contest to be waged in other arenas – defence, energy, cyber security and outer space.

Alongside the contest for technological mastery runs a contest over its governance. Whose preferred paradigm will regulate the emerging global commons such as cyberspace and outer space?

Should they be democratised, or subject to the free market, or state controlled? Discussions on cyberspace and outer-space regulations are only still in their nascent stages.

In this age, smart technologies and big data hold the keys to the future – and those with the keys will retain economic and geopolitical relevance, shaping global rules. This technological contest and its impact on the economy also disrupt the conduct of foreign policy.

So, what is a small country like Singapore to do in this brave new world we find ourselves in?

STAYING RELEVANT

A new digital revolution is upon us, and Singapore must master these new technologies if we are to stay

relevant. To stay close to the cutting edge, we must hold true to the “first principles” of our foreign policy.

In a word, it has always boiled down to “relevance”.

In a lecture delivered in 2009, (founding prime minister) Lee Kuan Yew said: “Singapore cannot take its relevance for granted. Small countries perform no vital or irreplaceable functions in the international system. Singapore has to continually reconstruct itself and keep its relevance to the world and to create political and economic space.”

These words still ring true today.

First, we must remain open to the world, and continue to engage all major powers in a disciplined and principled way, remaining helpful, reliable and neutral.

Building walls to shelter our population from change is not an option. We must actively create the conditions that will attract others to keep coming.

We will continue to strengthen our air, sea and digital connectivity, and entrench Singapore's hub status in new communications routes such as the new Maritime Silk Road – the submarine cables that transmit data.

We must also strengthen our “convening power”, not only for meetings like the US-North Korea Summit last year, but also for assembling multicultural teams to build new technologies. We do not wish to be compelled to choose sides in this technological contest. Singapore remains convinced that synergies will be more powerful when we cooperate to create common rather than competing platforms.

Second, Singapore will continue to fortify the rules-based international order and contribute actively to shaping new norms to govern the global commons.

Our position on cyberspace and outer-space regulation is unequivocal – all must be involved in shaping the new rules, and the concerns of small states must be taken on board. Singapore will continue to send our best people to these expert group negotiations to make a positive contribution.

Third, we must continue diversifying our partnerships to capitalise on new opportunities – many of which are right on our doorstep.

Our region is young, dynamic, and there is a rising middle class. There is boundless potential. We can create new partnerships by building thicker and deeper linkages across Asean.

We took a first step in this direction with the establishment of the Asean Smart Cities Network under our Asean chairmanship last year. It was very well received by our neighbours; 26 pilot cities developed action plans from 2018 until 2025, while several project partnerships were launched.

In future, the development of technology will not be driven top-down by state institutions, but by a trilateral collaboration between the state, the private sector and consumers. So I was very proud that Asean took a step towards harnessing that productive dynamic.

Disruption brings challenges, but also many opportunities. Singapore will never be a global superpower. But we must master technology if we are to remain successful and preserve our independence to make decisions based on our own sovereign interests.

THE SWEET SPOT

We can remain in a sweet spot by playing our cards right, just as we have for the last five decades. We did this in the 1960s when we industrialised and caught the off-shoring wave.

In the 1970s, we bet on the right horse by doubling down on logistics management with our container port and airport. We then moved on to electronics in the 1980s and life science later. We can do it again with big data and smart technology.

For Singapore to be successful, all Singaporeans need to be fully prepared to collectively face this age of disruption. This is why economic restructuring is a key priority for the Singapore Government.

The Government is committed to improving our education system and upskilling schemes such as SkillsFuture.

We will also make appropriate adjustments to our social security system to give Singaporeans confidence to navigate these disruptive times.

Since independence, we have relied on our people's ingenuity and tenacity to survive. The times we live in require us to double down on these qualities. The Government will do its best to prepare Singaporeans, even as we explore new markets, build creative partnerships and facilitate businesses. Companies and individuals now need to be entrepreneurial and adventurous, seize new opportunities and remain resilient.

If we do not ride the technology wave, we will sink under it. But, if we succeed, we can navigate safely through our current digital Gilded Age into a new Golden Age.

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Game theory says don't bet against a no-deal Brexit

Leonid Bershidsky

The British Parliament's votes on Tuesday night may not have made it easy for anyone involved in the Brexit process, but they mark a moment of clarity from a game theory point of view.

It is apparent that Britain, represented by Parliament, wants to play a one-off prisoner's dilemma game with the European Union. The EU, for its part, is playing an infinitely repeated prisoner's dilemma.

Both parties are acting rationally in their own way – within the constraints of the different games they are playing.

A cooperative outcome is possible only if one of the sides accepts the other's vision of what game is being played.

On Tuesday, Parliament made it clear that it doesn't want the country to simply give up and stay

in a customs union with the EU, it doesn't want an extension of the Brexit process without a clear idea of what to do with the extension, and it does not want to leave the bloc without a deal.

It wants Prime Minister Theresa May to go back to the negotiating table with the EU and get a better deal (specifically, one that doesn't land Britain in a permanent customs union with the EU to avoid a hard border in Ireland).

In more abstract terms, Parliament wants Mrs May to play the one-shot prisoner's dilemma.

In this game, both sides are prisoners and have the opportunity to cooperate or to defect (compromise on the Irish backstop or face a no-deal Brexit).

The dominant strategy in the prisoner's dilemma, the best one to adopt without knowing the other side's intentions, is to defect (show readiness to leave without a deal). If the other side chooses to cooperate, so much the better.

Parliament is, effectively, telling Mrs May to assume that the pay-off matrix in this game is skewed and the EU benefits more from cooperating (for example, going for a time-limited backstop) than Britain would from caving to EU demands and staying indefinitely in the customs union.

In experiments, people assigned higher pay-offs cooperate more often than the ones with low pay-offs (although it must be said that cooperation rates still don't rise above one-third).

Parliament's game is risky then, but it's not irrational.

If the EU, too, were playing that game, it would make its move on the basis of an assessment of whether Britain would really be prepared to leave without a deal or whether it would blink at the last moment.

But the EU isn't playing that game. Instead, it's playing an infinitely repeated prisoner's dilemma.

The other player in this game is

not Britain but any member state.

It doesn't end with Brexit: After Britain, other countries (we don't know how many, so the game is played as an infinite one) may be tempted to seek an EU exit on favourable terms, that is, keeping the trade benefits but not following lots of common rules.

In such a game, always defecting

If the two parties keep playing their separate games, no deal is the likeliest scenario. A compromise (on one or the other side's terms) is possible only if one of the parties accepts the other's version of the game.

is still the fail-safe strategy for both players, but cooperation makes more sense (and occurs more frequently in experiments) than in the one-off prisoner's dilemma: Repetition makes it possible that the other side, too, will cooperate and a mutually beneficial pattern will emerge.

But once Player Member State defects – that is, refuses to blink and compromise – it makes sense for Player EU to default to a punishment strategy, for example, what's known as the “grim trigger strategy”, refusing to cooperate in every interaction after the other player's defection.

In the game the EU is playing, some concessions make sense if Britain cooperates – for example, if Britain accepts the Irish backstop or some other form of sovereignty loss in exchange for continued trade on favourable terms.

They make little sense, however, if Britain defects (that is, effectively threatens to leave without a deal

and refuses the backstop).

If the two parties keep playing their separate games, no deal is the likeliest scenario.

A compromise (on one or the other side's terms) is possible only if one of the parties accepts the other's version of the game.

That is still possible at this very late stage in the Brexit process. But accepting the EU's perspective appears to be difficult for the British Parliament because it sees Brexit as a one-off deal.

For the same reason, it's tough for the EU to accept Britain's perspective: The EU knows the game may well continue with other members.

If I were betting on the outcome based purely on game theory considerations and not on the complex web of personal preferences and ambitions apparent from the blow-by-blow coverage of the Brexit process, I'd place my money on no deal.

BLOOMBERG



Philippine Marines in a drill with their United States counterparts on a beach in the Philippines last May. The writer says a greater source of concern for Manila is the lack of clarity on the precise geographical scope of the Mutual Defence Treaty as Washington has been vague about the extent of its commitment, in particular the island territories under its jurisdiction. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

S.E.AView

What's driving Manila's move to reset US alliance

Traditionally strong ties fraying as Filipinos tire of US coyness over defence commitments



Richard Javad Heydarian

For The Straits Times

The Philippine government's recent call for a review of its Mutual Defence Treaty (MDT) with the United States puts into question one of Asia's oldest alliances at a time of growing US-China rivalry in the region.

The announcement in December is significant on several counts.

It comes at a time of an intensifying power struggle between the US and China, and was made public by no less than Philippine Defence Secretary Delfin Lorenzana, who spent more than a decade as a defence attache in Washington and has devoted years to strengthening the Philippine-US alliance.

The Philippine defence establishment has long been viewed as the bedrock of the Philippine-US alliance, but there is growing frustration among the Philippine elite over the US' ambiguous commitment.

Mr Lorenzana raised the stakes by signalling that the abrogation of the MDT is an option on the table.

The treaty, signed in 1951 during the Cold War, requires one party to come to the defence of the other in case of an attack on its territory.

"Do we still have a Cold War today? Is it still relevant to our security? Maybe not," Mr Lorenzana said at a press briefing. Asked if scrapping the MDT was an option, he replied that the approach was to consider whether it was "in the interest of the nation, not the interest of other nations".

The review process provides a unique opportunity for the two countries to reset their decades-long alliance for 21st-century challenges, especially in the light of the South China Sea disputes.

Crucially, Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte has repeatedly threatened to end his country's alliance with the US amid open disagreements over human rights and democracy issues.

Moreover, the Duterte administration has consciously pursued a more independent track in recent years, denying

Washington access to key Philippine bases bordering the South China Sea and questioning its freedom of navigation operations in the disputed area.

In fact, rapprochement with China has become a focal point of Mr Duterte's foreign policy. Within his first two years in office, he made three official visits to Beijing, while snubbing the White House. This is a remarkable departure from his predecessors who considered Washington to be among their first major overseas destinations.

The US' repatriation in December of the famed Balangiga bells, which were forcibly taken by occupying American forces from a Philippine town during the colonial period, was expected to bring about a thaw in bilateral relations.

After all, Mr Duterte had made the return of the bells a central theme of his anti-colonial tirades against Washington. But it would take way more than the symbolic, albeit important, gesture to overcome a longstanding grievance over the treaty.

DOUBTS ABOUT TREATY OBLIGATIONS

There is growing consensus, even among US-friendly elements in the Philippine establishment, that the alliance as it stands is in desperate need of a shake-up.

At the heart of the problem is US ambiguity over its obligations under the treaty, which was negotiated shortly after Washington granted independence to its former Asian colony under extremely asymmetrical conditions.

There are two foundational criticisms levied against the treaty.

First, it concerns Washington's ability to militarily intervene swiftly on behalf of its ally in the event of a major contingency. According to Article VI of the MDT, each party "would act to meet the common dangers in accordance with its constitutional processes".

The emphasis on constitutional processes means that any US administration will likely have to rely on congressional approval before it comes to the aid of the Philippines. Depending on American public opinion, which has increasingly veered towards isolationism, Congress could very well delay and refuse any request for military intervention, no matter how urgent, from Manila.

Second, a greater source of concern for Manila is the lack of clarity on the precise geographical scope of the treaty. Article V of the



Philippine Air Force personnel unloading the Balangiga bells in December. The bells were taken by American forces during the colonial period, and their return was expected to bring about a thaw in bilateral relations. PHOTO: REUTERS

At a time when Beijing is flexing its muscle in the region, and there are growing concerns over Washington's declining influence, the last thing the Trump administration needs is to lose a century-old ally... Above all, any significant, long-term downgrade in US-Philippine relations could have a domino effect, signalling an irreversible decline of American regional leadership in favour of China.

treaty defines it as "an armed attack on the metropolitan territory of either of the parties, or on the island territories under its jurisdiction in the Pacific or on its armed forces, public vessels or aircraft in the Pacific".

But Washington has been vague on the extent of its commitment, in particular the "island territories under its jurisdiction".

Referring to the Kalayaan Island Group, which refers to Philippine-claimed and controlled islands in the Spratlys, Mr Lorenzana said: "The US is very ambivalent. They are saying the MDT covers only the metropolitan Philippines. I think their definition of metropolitan Philippines is just the whole country and the Kalayaan Island Group is not included."

This is an extremely salient point in view of the ongoing disputes in

the South China Sea, where the Philippines is at loggerheads with China and several other claimant states.

Much to the consternation of Manila, on two occasions, namely the Chinese occupation of Philippine-claimed Mischief Reef (1994) and Scarborough Shoal (2012), the US remained largely on the sidelines.

Then US President Barack Obama's remarks during his visit to Manila in 2014 that his country was not interested in going to war over a "bunch of rocks" was duly noted.

What also stood out for observers in Manila was the contrast in response by the US on its commitments to Japan and the Philippines.

Mr Obama reaffirmed during his visit to Asia in 2014 that Article V of the US-Japan treaty, which has similar language to the MDT, covered the Senkaku Islands administered by Japan. The islands are also claimed by China, which calls them Diaoyu. But while in Manila, he was less categorical, saying simply that US commitment to the Philippines was "ironclad".

US President Donald Trump's administration has yet to provide greater clarity on these issues, though top American officials have repeatedly sought to reassure their Philippine counterparts that they will remain good allies and will defend the Philippines if and when necessary.

Many in Manila, however, remain sceptical as to whether the US will really come to the Philippines' rescue in the event of conflict in the South China Sea, especially in view of China's militarisation of disputed islets and reefs, and repeated harassment of supply missions to those areas that Manila still controls.

At the same time, the Philippines

is worried about getting dragged into a great power conflict as an American ally just as it resents the latter's commitment issues.

Asked about the objective of the review, Mr Lorenzana replied that it was to determine if the Philippines should "maintain it, strengthen it, or scrap it".

The review process, which may take months and will likely be overseen by a special commission vetted by both allies, provides a historic opportunity for the Philippines to compel the US to provide greater "strategic clarity" on the extent of its commitments.

WHAT'S AT STAKE

In exchange for greater US commitment, Manila could grant expanded American access to strategically located sites such as the Basa and Bautista airbases bordering the South China Sea.

At a time when Beijing is flexing its muscle in the region, and there are growing concerns over Washington's declining influence, the last thing the Trump administration needs is to lose a century-old ally.

The Philippines' location, perched right at the heart of the Indo-Pacific, has long made it a crucial forward deployment base for the projection of American naval power in the Western Pacific and the South China Sea.

Moreover, the Philippines' 2016 landmark arbitration award at The Hague provides an important justification, albeit indirectly, for American freedom-of-navigation operations and related activities against Chinese expansive claims in the area.

As the country coordinator for Asean and China for the next two years, the Philippines also holds a crucial diplomatic role in mediating regional geopolitics.

Above all, any significant, long-term downgrade in US-Philippine relations could have a domino effect, signalling an irreversible decline of American regional leadership in favour of China.

As for the Philippines, its alliance with the US has been an indispensable source of assistance for disaster relief and humanitarian operations as well as counter-terrorism operations. And American military support remains the Philippines' best latent deterrence against further Chinese encroachment into its traditional waters.

There is much at stake for those who champion strong Philippine-US ties. A failure to refine the treaty will surely strengthen the hand of critics who favour strategic neutrality and improved relations with China.

The Philippine-US relationship is one based on profoundly shared interests and needs to be balanced by a more symmetrical defence treaty. Amid fundamental changes in the region's power dynamics, this alliance is facing its moment of truth.

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India needs jobs, not basic income guarantees

Dhiraj Nayyar

During election season, everyone likes the idea of giving voters more money.

India's Congress Party president Rahul Gandhi, the de facto opposition leader, says his party will guarantee a minimum income for the country's poor if victorious.

Reports suggest Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government may compete by announcing some form of direct transfer of cash to farmers in the interim Budget to be revealed today, which could cost the exchequer nearly US\$10 billion (S\$13.5 billion) annually.

While governments everywhere should take care of their most vulnerable citizens, the idea of guaranteeing a basic income is wrong for India right now.

Fundamentally, it would work only if two conditions were met. First, large sections of the population would have to be mired in absolute poverty. And second, all other subsidies and welfare programmes for them would have to be abolished in order to free up the necessary funds without completely blowing open India's fiscal deficit, which is already strained. Neither condition prevails in India.

While there's no recent government estimate of the number of people living below the poverty line, credible research by the Brookings Institution suggests that extreme poverty in India, defined as those living on less than US\$2 a day, now afflicts only 5 per cent of the population.

Granted, that is still more than 70 million people. But, for the vast majority of Indians, the challenge is no longer subsistence, it is aspiration. No basic income guarantee will be able to address rising aspirations unless it's a very large sum of money.

At India's level of national income, providing anything more than a subsistence income would simply be unaffordable.

Press reports say the government's idea would be to replace existing subsidy programmes with a direct cash transfer. But, realistically, the chances of any Indian government, no matter how committed to fiscal rectitude, cutting down India's gigantic maze of welfare programmes is negligible, probably zero.

In fact, it is hard to name any government welfare scheme that has ever been abolished in India. Many have been renamed, tweaked, often expanded, but never eliminated altogether.

Given the reality of an extremely competitive polity, no politician will risk being labelled anti-poor by abolishing even one, let alone the entire gamut, of welfare schemes. Any cash-transfer scheme will thus likely be a top-up over everything else.

Perhaps the biggest problem with such ideas taking centre stage in India's political economy right now is that it distracts attention from the more pressing task at hand – creating high-quality jobs.

Whoever wins the next election – be it Mr Gandhi's Congress or Mr Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party or a third alternative – may end up implementing some version of an income guarantee. That would probably yield a short-term political dividend. Ultimately, however, any new government will be judged by whether or not it can create jobs.

Welfare can never be a substitute for productive employment. For politicians who have shied away from job-creating but politically difficult economic reforms – in banking, as well as land and labour laws – a well-delivered welfare scheme may buy time.

It would be so much better for India, though, if the case for reform was argued with the same intensity and implemented with equal alacrity. India might, after all, be able to afford one more welfare measure if it were accompanied simultaneously by big-bang market reforms. BLOOMBERG

Dhiraj Nayyar is chief economist at Vedanta and the author of Modi And Markets: Arguments For Transformation.

The Trump doctrine – retrench and refocus

The overarching goal is to maintain US primacy on a more manageable footing, while focusing more energy and effort on containing the power and influence of China

Ross Douthat

Two years into his presidency, Mr Donald Trump has no clear legislative strategy, no policy agenda, no plan for remedying his persistent unpopularity and a path to re-election sufficiently bleak that he is trying to bait a political naif, Starbucks billionaire Howard Schultz, into running as a third-party spoiler. Also, he might be impeached.

Yet, at the same time, amid all the domestic chaos and incompetence and political malpractice, this administration continues to act in foreign policy – not tweet obnoxiously, not rage behind the scenes, but act – as if it’s following a serious grand strategy, one sufficiently coherent and plausible and forward-looking that future presidents might reasonably imitate it.

This Trump doctrine, in practice, isn’t the isolationism that he sometimes promised on the campaign trail; nor is it the flailing bellicosity that many of his critics feared.

It is a doctrine of disentanglement, retrenchment and realignment, in which the United States tries to abandon its most idealistic hopes and unrealistic military commitments, narrow its list of potential enemies and consolidate its attempts at influence.

The overarching goal is not to cede US primacy or abandon alliances, as Mr Trump’s opponents often charge; rather, it’s to maintain US primacy on a more manageable footing, while focusing more energy and effort on

containing the power and influence of China.

Consider the two administration efforts in the news this week. The first is the White House’s decision to support the opposition leader in Venezuela and build a coalition to undermine the dictatoral Maduro government. The second is the advancing effort to negotiate a deal with the Taliban that would end America’s 17-years-and-counting military commitment in Afghanistan.

If a deal is struck and US forces actually withdraw, Mr Trump’s personal scepticism of the Afghanistan intervention will have helped produce an outcome that large parts of the foreign policy establishment long resisted – an endgame that accepts the possibility of true defeat, a full Taliban takeover, as the price of reducing American commitments and bringing troops home.

The Venezuelan effort is striking in its establishment-foreign-policy normalcy. Trying to undermine a left-wing Latin American dictator while talking in flowery language about human rights is the kind of policy you might have expected from a President Marco Rubio (who is, indeed, a prime mover behind the policy), and, as Mr Uri Friedman of The Atlantic wrote, the strategy has been advanced in a very unTrumpy way: with “a well-oiled diplomatic campaign, closely coordinated with allies and rigorously on message”. There’s even a Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush hand, Mr Elliott Abrams, on hand to help run the administration’s policy.

To Mr Friedman, this normalcy is strange and dissonant and hypocritical. “Here was a president



Amid the domestic chaos and incompetence and political malpractice, the Trump administration continues to act in foreign policy as if it is following a serious grand strategy – a doctrine of disentanglement, retrenchment and realignment, says the writer. PHOTO: NYTIMES

who preaches America First, who rarely invokes democracy and human rights in his unscripted remarks, who has voiced admiration for dictators such as Vladimir Putin and Kim Jong Un, sticking his neck out to restore democracy in a country that doesn’t usually figure among the top challenges to US interests.”

But, in fact, the administration’s different approaches can be harmonised. No US president before the end of the Cold War would have found it strange or dissonant to take an interventionist and self-righteous line where Latin America was concerned, while accepting deals with bad actors and wooing autocrats in more far-flung and global theatres. There is a rhetorical tension, obviously, involved in defending human rights in Venezuela while you ponder a treaty with the Taliban and seek an accommodation with Mr Kim or Syria’s President Bashar al-Assad – and Mr Trump is not exactly the master of rhetorical finesse.

But from the Monroe Doctrine onwards, the US has traditionally treated its hemispheric neighbours differently from Eurasian powers – for the very sound strategic reason that they are close and countries like Syria and Afghanistan are not.

This reasoning was abandoned by post-Cold War presidents, and especially by Mr Bush, in the heady days when it appeared that

America could project power as easily in Kabul as in the Caribbean. And despite the Iraq disaster, most of Mr Bush’s would-be Republican heirs – Mr John McCain and Mr Mitt Romney, as well as Mr Rubio and Mr Jeb Bush – maintained a similarly maximalist posture, in which every theatre was supposedly a vital one, every tyrant a potential enemy, and we should be prepared to fight in Afghanistan and Syria and Libya and eastern Ukraine as readily as we would fight for a Nato ally.

Compared with that vision, the Trump doctrine aims for a more limited and sustainable view of US commitments.

Along with Islamic extremism, it seeks to confront and contain two major state-based enemies, China and Iran, and it takes a harsh line towards their potential allies and clients in the Americas.

But it has no nation-building ambitions in the Muslim world, no dreams of pushing Nato into the Caucasus, and in East Asia, it’s trying to woo the Kim regime into some kind of bizarre friendship instead of acting like Pyongyang is just as great a long-term danger as its patron in Beijing.

The administration’s official European goals (if not Mr Trump’s behind-the-scenes anti-Nato grumbling) also fit plausibly into its larger framework: Building up a stronger military presence on

Nato’s Russia-facing flank while getting other countries to bear more of the military burden is the most plausible way to preserve the Western alliance’s basic purposes while the United States refocuses on China.

And, in the long run, Mr Trump’s dream (whatever its motivations) of a better working relationship with Russia also fits with a retrench-and-refocus framework – with the major caveat that Mr Putin seems too interested in disruption to make a genuine and cooperative detente imaginable for now.

Let me stress that I don’t think Mr Trump’s grand strategy is springing fully formed from the President’s own mind (he isn’t scribbling notes about the Monroe Doctrine, I assume), or, for that matter, anyone else’s; instead it’s emerging organically as a synthesis of his own blustering, quasi-isolationist impulses and the more hawkish and internationalist and status quo-oriented views of the people working for him.

That makes it interesting for future international-relations scholars to study – but also vulnerable to sudden changes of personnel or presidential mood. And, of course, it has other vulnerabilities as well. Events often destroy even well-thought-through grand strategies, and every foreign policy manoeuvre carries risks.

The hawks who fear that Islamic extremism will surge if we pull back from Afghanistan and Syria could be vindicated. So could the institutionalists who fear that Mr Trump’s bluster is damaging our standing and disillusioning our friends, and the human rights activists who regard this administration’s cynicism as carte blanche for thugs and dictators, and the simple Trump fearers (like myself) who worry that he could make a truly catastrophic blunder should, say, the North Korea negotiations blow up or a real crisis with Russia or China comes along.

But those of us who fear Mr Trump also need to be honest when he exceeds our expectations.

Before his election, I wanted a foreign policy that was less hubristic and more calculating than what most leading Republican politicians were offering, that showed a willingness to limit foreign interventions and conduct diplomatic experiments while also trying to maintain US primacy in a more multipolar, Chinese-influenced world.

Within certain limits, and with a lot of stumbling and bluster, that’s roughly what Mr Trump has delivered. And however his foreign policy looks by November 2020, I suspect that future administrations of both parties will often find themselves imitating the strategy of his first two years. NYTIMES

This could be the year US alliances fall apart

Hal Brands

After two years under rhetorical assault from the president, US alliances have somehow held up. This year, however, the constraints on US President Donald Trump’s anti-alliance instincts are falling away, and a mix of internal and external pressures are endangering several key alliances at once.

This trend is most visible with respect to Nato. The transatlantic alliance has been a target of Mr Trump’s ire for decades. Since taking office, he has berated European leaders, waffled on America’s Article 5 commitment to protect allies, and even mused about withdrawing from the pact.

Yet, for two years, largely thanks to the initiative of Congress and the Pentagon, day-to-day relations with Nato remained relatively steady. The administration increased spending on military activities meant to deter Russian aggression. The alliance also took steps to improve its military readiness and address unconventional threats such as cyber attacks and information warfare. This progress, however, was largely dependent on the presence of committed, pro-Nato officials in the American bureaucracy. Those officials are becoming more scarce by the day.

Secretary of Defence James Mattis is gone, replaced by an acting secretary – Mr Patrick Shanahan – who seems more inclined to fulfil the President’s wishes. National Security Adviser John Bolton and Secretary of State

Mike Pompeo are not anti-Nato, but their hostility to the European Union poisons their relationships with European colleagues. Less visibly, several key Pentagon and State Department officials responsible for the Nato portfolio have left or will soon leave their posts.

None of this means that Mr Trump is likely to withdraw from Nato. Bipartisan support for a recent House resolution that seeks to prevent Mr Trump from unilaterally pulling out of that alliance is a clear warning of the political price he would pay for doing so. The most likely scenario is that there will simply be less constructive leadership from Washington at a time when Nato confronts major challenges from Russia and illiberalism is surging within the alliance.

Things are no better on the other side of the world. The US-Japan alliance has come through the first half of Mr Trump’s term in stronger shape than one might have expected, given the President’s three-decade history of Japan bashing. Yet, the strains are subtly mounting.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s assiduous personal cultivation of Mr Trump did not prevent the President from peremptorily withdrawing from the Trans-Pacific Partnership in his first week in office. Now, Mr Abe fears that Mr Trump may cut a grand bargain with China at Japan’s expense, or make a deal with North Korea that similarly ignores Tokyo’s security concerns.

And while the challenges in the

US-Japan alliance are merely simmering, the problems may be coming to a boil in two other alliances.

The US-South Korea alliance is in crisis, as negotiations on the amount Seoul pays to defray the costs of the American troop presence have deadlocked. According to South Korean officials, US negotiators asked for a dramatic hike in these payments, casting doubt on whether Washington was dealing in good faith.

The fact that the US side has asked for annual renegotiations – as opposed to a multi-year agreement – has heightened concerns that Mr Trump will simply ask for more again next year. The resulting impasse may lead the Pentagon to stop paying South Korean contractors starting in the spring.

It could also give an American president who has never liked the US presence on the Korean peninsula an excuse to begin reducing that presence. Last year, Congress passed legislation prohibiting the Pentagon from cutting US troop levels in South Korea to below 22,000 (from the current 28,000). That prohibition can be circumvented, however, if the secretary of defence certifies that doing so is in the national interest.

Making the future of the alliance even more precarious is that this internal dispute is happening at a critical stage in US-North Korea diplomacy. As the upcoming summit with Mr Kim Jong Un approaches, Mr Trump will surely

America’s most important alliance in South-east Asia is also entering a danger zone. For years, the US has refused to clarify whether the Mutual Defence Treaty with the Philippines covers the islands and reefs that Manila controls in the South China Sea. That ambiguity is meant to avoid writing a blank cheque that Manila might cash by provoking China. Yet, given how rapidly China’s expansionism is shifting the balance of influence in the region, ambiguity is rapidly becoming untenable.

be tempted to make a big concession that will jump-start moribund negotiations on North Korean missiles and nuclear bombs.

Given how little he cares for the US troop presence in the first place – and given that he suspended US-South Korean military exercises after his previous summit with Mr Kim – Mr Trump may try to kill two birds with one stone. He could withdraw some US forces as a way of appeasing Mr Kim and punishing the South Koreans for not paying up.

Doing so would be a gift to Pyongyang, Moscow and Beijing: It would be a big step towards undermining the alliance with Seoul and America’s position in North-east Asia.

Finally, America’s most important alliance in South-east Asia is also entering a danger zone. For years, the US has refused to clarify whether the Mutual Defence Treaty with the Philippines covers the islands and reefs that Manila controls in the South China Sea. That ambiguity is meant to avoid writing a blank cheque that Manila might cash by provoking China. Yet, given how rapidly China’s expansionism is shifting the balance of influence in the region, ambiguity is rapidly becoming untenable.

Since 2012, when the US failed to prevent Beijing from seizing control of Scarborough Shoal, Philippine officials have worried that Washington cannot deter the Chinese salami-slicing that is paring away their country’s sovereignty.

Further fuelling the crisis is the fact that the Philippines now has a president – Mr Rodrigo Duterte –

who is openly sceptical of the value the US defence commitment provides.

As a result of all this, Secretary of National Defence Delfin Lorenzana has been signalling that Manila may re-evaluate its commitment to the Mutual Defence Treaty if Washington doesn’t clarify its position. Yet, the Trump administration has so far been silent, perhaps because American officials sense that this issue will be a loser with a president who sees alliances as burdens.

A position of continued American ambiguity may reinforce Mr Duterte’s belief that Chinese power will ultimately dominate South-east Asia, and that Manila should accommodate rather than resist the inevitable. That, in turn, would make it far harder for the US to rally the region against Chinese revisionism; it would erode America’s position in South-east Asia.

To be fair, the crisis of this particular alliance is not really Mr Trump’s fault. Reassuring an exposed ally – while also restraining that ally from unwise actions – would test the abilities of even a competent, committed administration.

Yet, the chances that things could turn out badly, with the Philippines or any of these allies, are only heightened by the fact that America currently has a hollowed-out administration.

Since Mr Trump took office, US foreign policy wonks have worried that his presidency would be a period of grave peril for America’s alliances. This might be the year that proves them right. BLOOMBERG

• Hal Brands is the Henry Kissinger Distinguished Professor at Johns Hopkins University’s School of Advanced International Studies.

BIG PICTURE



WEATHER

Windy, with passing showers in the afternoon.
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Getting under their skin

X-ray images of fish? Not quite. These are some of the specimens on display at Aquaria KLCC, in the Malaysian capital, during the Transparent Fish Exhibition that will run until March.

To create this appearance, enzymes were used on the fish before chemical dyes were applied to stain the skeletons, giving visitors a unique glimpse into fish anatomy.

Specimens on display include tilapia (top right image), mirror dory (centre) and anchovy (bottom right).

The exhibition was launched together with Taiwan's National Museum of Marine Biology and Aquarium and Universiti Malaysia Terengganu.

PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

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NUMBER OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL DIGS AT THE PADANG;
ONE ONGOING, PREVIOUS ONES IN 2003 AND 2009 **B2**

Body-worn cameras for SCDF paramedics

Recordings to be used for training and also protect ambulance crew in cases of abuse

Tan Tam Mei

Paramedics from the Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF) will be equipped with body-worn cameras from today in a bid to improve the quality and effectiveness of its emergency medical services.

The compact device, worn over the ear, will be progressively rolled out to all paramedics by next year, the SCDF said yesterday.

The recordings from these cameras will be used for coaching and training, as well as help fine-tune medical procedures.

The devices will also provide greater accountability on interactions between its ambulance crew and patients, the SCDF said.

More SCDF officers, including paramedics, are facing verbal and physical abuse while on duty. Last

year, the force said, there were 26 reported cases of its front-line officers being abused, up from 23 the previous year. The figure has been increasing since 2016, when 20 cases were reported.

In its statement yesterday, the SCDF also addressed privacy concerns, saying that in certain situations, like maternity cases, paramedics will stop recording on the devices.

There are also plans to include live-streaming capabilities in the cameras, which will allow doctors off-site to give medical advice to paramedics attending to complex cases on the ground, if necessary.

The director of the SCDF's medical department, Assistant Commissioner Yazid Abdullah, said the body-worn cameras are part of efforts to enhance emergency ambulance operations and improve

patient outcomes. "At the same time, we have put in place robust control measures to regulate the use of the (devices) and the recorded data," he added.

For instance, only authorised personnel will be allowed to collect, store and use the data. Any access to the data will be logged to enable audit checks. It will also be encrypted for added security.

In addition, SCDF will ensure that the data is deleted after 90 days from the date of recording, unless there is a reason to retain it, such as for police investigations.

"Any officer who misuses the body-worn cameras or data will be dealt with severely," said the SCDF.

Public concern over privacy is understandable, especially in the wake of incidents like the SingHealth cyber attack and Monday's revelation by the Health Ministry that the data of 14,200 people with HIV had been stolen and leaked online, said lawyer Bryan Tan.

Mr Tan, who specialises in technology law and data protection, said given the nature of emergency medical calls, some footage might capture intimate moments and in private places.

"We do expect that SCDF will train its paramedics on how to use the devices and tell them when they should or should not use them."

As more agencies explore the use of body-worn cameras to help in work processes and improve service and efficiency, they have to be aware of the risks, he said.

"With every new tech element we introduce, there is additional risk. It's a matter of how we mitigate that additional risk," said Mr Tan.

SCDF joins other organisations like the National Environment Agency and the Singapore Police Force in equipping its officers with body-worn cameras.

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The compact device, worn over the ear, will be progressively rolled out to all SCDF paramedics by next year. Such body-worn cameras are being introduced to improve the quality and effectiveness of the agency's emergency medical services. PHOTO: FACEBOOK/ SINGAPORE CIVIL DEFENCE FORCE

26

Number of reported cases last year of SCDF's front-line officers being abused, up from 23 the previous year.

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Archaeologists begin third dig at the Padang

Site has many layers of history going back before 1819

Melody Zaccheus
Heritage and Community Correspondent

A dig is taking place at the historic Padang. The pit, measuring 2m by 1m, was set up yesterday.

It is the third archaeological dig at the Padang. According to published reports, previous digs there were conducted in 2003 and 2009.

On Monday, the area in the Civic District was the site of the bicentennial's launch officiated by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong. The bicentennial marks the British arrival in Singapore in 1819.

The Padang has many layers of history. Not only has it served as the site of multiple National Day Parades since 1966, but it was also where Sir Stamford Raffles, Temenggong Abdul Rahman and Sultan Hussein Shah of Johor signed

the 1819 treaty allowing the British East India Company to set up a trading post here.

Houses, which included those of affluent European merchants, were built in the area from the 1820s.

But its history goes back even further. It was where Palembang prince Sang Nila Utama was said to have spotted a beast which led him to rename Temasek as Singapura or Lion City.

In previous digs, archaeologists discovered the same pure, white sand which Sang Nila Utama was documented to have seen some time around 1299 from a vantage point. This white sand had reportedly drawn him to Singapore.

The modern-day archaeological digs therefore proved that this account, detailed in the Sejarah Melayu, or Malay Annals, is based on more than mere legend.

A glass bangle with yellow stripes



Workers on site at the Padang, where previous archaeological digs were conducted in 2003 and 2009. Artefacts unearthed here include carnelian beads and a Chinese coin. White sand found here is believed to be what Sang Nila Utama saw that drew him to Singapore.
ST PHOTO: MELODY ZACCHEUS

TREASURE HUNT

I'm interested in Singapore's history and enjoy treasure hunting and finding new things.



ALEXANDER HARTONOTAN, a 10-year-old who was onsite at the dig along with other onlookers.

on a dark red background, carnelian beads and a Chinese coin, likely from the Song Dynasty (960-1279), were also uncovered by previous digs. There were other artefacts as well, including what was likely a Straits Settlements 1/4-cent coin.

On site yesterday were tourists and other onlookers, including Kenneth Ng and Alexander Hartono Tan, who were with Kenneth's mother. The boys, both 10 and home-schooled, expressed an interest in archaeology and have their own rock, shell and coin collections. Alexander said: "I'm inter-

ested in Singapore's history and enjoy treasure hunting and finding new things."

In 2015, archaeologists digging at the nearby Empress Place found imperial-grade jade ceramics made between 1368 and 1398. Such ceramics were bestowed only on overseas leaders by China's Ming Dynasty Emperor Hongwu. It showed that Singapore may have had an established government with a ruler or chieftain in the late 14th century who had ties with overseas heads.

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Social media, exhibition to draw youth to River Hongbao

Derek Wong

An interactive exhibition held in a display modelled after a giant twakow – a bumboat that used to ply the Singapore River – will be one of the main features of River Hongbao as the organisers go all out to attract the young.

More than 50 volunteer youth ambassadors will man the exhibition during the event, which has been held annually to celebrate Chinese New Year since 1987.

This year's celebration at The Float@Marina Bay will also feature a range of social media activities, such as an Instagram photo competition.

As this 33rd edition of the River Hongbao is also a bicentennial edition, the exhibition – A Harbour And Home: The Singapore River Through Time – will highlight the history of the Singapore River's transformation.

One of the student guides from Nanyang Girls' High School, Laura Lee, 16, said yesterday at a media preview of the exhibition: "It is a once-in-a-lifetime chance to be part of the bicentennial edition of the event."

For the exhibition, she and her schoolmate, Rae Tng, also 16, penned a Chinese poem about the river, reflecting on how all Singa-



Four of the more than 50 volunteer youth ambassadors who will be guides at the A Harbour And Home: The Singapore River Through Time exhibition, which is one of the main features of River Hongbao this year: (from left) Chen Jian and Selina Lim Yi Hui from Hwa Chong Institution; and Laura Lee and Rae Tng from Nanyang Girls' High School. Admission to River Hongbao festival and exhibition is free. ST PHOTO: DESMOND WEE

poreans can contribute to the nation in their own way.

The other five schools involved in the exhibition are Hwa Chong Institution, Chung Cheng High School, River Valley High School, Singapore Chinese Girls' School and CHIJ St Nicholas Girls' School.

The River Hongbao Hackathon, an entrepreneurship competition

that started last month, was held for tertiary students, and the top three teams will be running their stalls at the event.

Mr Ang Wei Neng, chairman of the River Hongbao organising committee, pointed to the use of technology, particularly social media, at this edition of River Hongbao.

He noted how, for example, the

organisers commissioned local YouTube film-maker Night Owl Cinematics to produce a marketing video for the event. The clip has garnered about 300,000 views.

"With all these interactive components and the use of technology, we hope to encourage younger Singaporeans to come to River Hongbao with their friends and family to en-

joy the excitement of Chinese New Year," said Mr Ang, who is an MP for Jurong GRC.

The festival will be held from Sunday to Feb 10 from 2pm to 11pm daily. It will be extended to 1am on Chinese New Year's Eve on Feb 4.

On the first two and last two nights of the festival, visitors will be treated to fireworks displays – each

lasting 12 minutes – by artists from Australia, China, Italy and the United States. Each night's display will be planned by a different country and feature a different theme.

River Hongbao is expected to draw more than a million people. Admission to the festival is free.

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TENDER NOTICE

INVITATION TO TENDER FOR:

THE PROVISION OF TICKETING SERVICES FOR THE SINGAPORE CHINESE CULTURAL CENTRE FOR A PERIOD OF TWENTY-FOUR (24) MONTHS WITH AN OPTION TO EXTEND FOR TWELVE (12) MONTHS OR TWENTY-FOUR (24) MONTHS
(No: SCCC/VM/2019/001)

- Singapore Chinese Cultural Centre (SCCC) seeks interested parties to submit tenders to provide ticketing services for SCCC for a period of twenty-four (24) months with an option to extend for twelve (12) months or twenty-four (24) months.
- Please download the Tender document from SCCC website at <https://www.singaporeccc.org.sg/tender>
- The Tenderer is required to complete and submit the following documents in sealed envelopes, together with all supporting data or relevant information in a ring-bound A4 folder, (with a soft copy of the application stored in a thumb drive), deposited by hand into the Tender Box located at SCCC by the stipulated closing date and time.
- The tender package is to be deposited into the Tender Box located at: Singapore Chinese Cultural Centre, 1 Straits Boulevard, Level 1 Lift Lobby, Singapore 018906.
- The closing date for submission is **Wednesday, 20 February 2019, 3pm**. Tenders submitted after the stipulated date and time will be disqualified.
- SCCC does not bind itself to award to the lowest of any offers.

UEN Registration No.: 201309577Z

Seeing migrant workers as inspiring role models

Vanessa Liu

They are mostly construction workers by day. But what do they do on their days off?

One volunteers at the non-profit Healthserve, which provides medical care and aid for migrant workers like himself.

Another exercises his passion for photography and a third writes poetry and short stories.

Yet another, inspired by the good education system he has seen in Singapore, decides to use some of his savings to set up a college offering courses in computer science and engineering in his hometown.

"I saw that Singapore has a very good education system and very good job opportunities. If you have good education, you'll have a sound mind. Education can change the world," he says in a video celebrating the lesser-known sides of migrant workers in Singapore.

The construction worker, who introduces himself as Joy, aged 39, in the video, has worked in Singapore for 15 years.

His story is one of a handful featured in Migrant Heroes, a roving exhibition that aims to help Singaporeans see migrant workers in a different light.

In particular, visitors can explore five of these stories, told in video format, on three 55-inch touch-screen panels that double as mirrors.

The panels are designed this way to inspire users to draw parallels between themselves and the migrant workers they come "face to face" with.

The exhibition, which combines art and technology, is housed in a scaffold that resembles a cut-off of a construction site.

Inside the structure, the resin walls are adorned with safety helmets and iridescent panels that appear to glow at night, as well as por-

TOP MARKS FOR EDUCATION

I saw that Singapore has a very good education system and very good job opportunities. If you have a good education, you'll have a sound mind. Education can change the world.



CONSTRUCTION WORKER JOY, 39, who decided to use some of his savings to set up a college offering courses in computer science and engineering in his hometown. His story is one of a handful featured in Migrant Heroes, a roving exhibition that aims to help Singaporeans see migrant workers in a different light. The exhibition is on at the Singapore Management University's Li Ka Shing Library until Feb 9.

traits of migrant workers and written messages of their hopes and dreams.

"People are afraid of construction sites. They don't generally get positive feelings when passing by one," Ms Kari Tamura Chua told The Straits Times.

Ms Chua, 29, is spearheading the Sama Sama campaign, which hopes to show that migrant workers can be inspiring role models who impact our communities positively.

"We hope that people are able to move past those negative feelings associated with a construction site, and start looking at the migrant community beyond what they do for a living," she said.

The exhibition is on at the Singapore Management University's Li Ka Shing Library until Feb 9.

Those who want to find out more about the Sama Sama campaign can go to www.samasama.sg.

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Pest control firm defends how workers caught snake



A pest control worker was bitten while capturing the python on Tuesday (above). The firm said yesterday the worker Farhan (left) had undergone surgery to remove an embedded snake tooth. PHOTOS: FACEBOOK/ANTICIMEX, ST READER

Company says team focused on public safety, wasn't cruel towards python

Timothy Goh and Ng Huiwen

Pest control firm Anticimex, whose workers captured a 3m-long python outside Tang Plaza on Tuesday, has thanked the public for the concern and support for its employee who was injured in the incident.

Yesterday, the managing director and president of its Asian division, Mr Tony Hurst, said in a Facebook post that the employee, Farhan, had undergone a minor surgery to remove an embedded snake tooth and is recovering.

When contacted, the company declined to give Farhan's full name and personal particulars.

Mr Hurst also defended the way his workers tackled the snake after criticisms that they did not do it right. Singapore's Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority had said it is investigating the matter after receiving feedback that the python was mishandled.

In his Facebook post, Mr Hurst said Tuesday's situation was "highly volatile and unpredictable" and required his workers to react quickly. "When the snake attempted to evade containment, not restraining the reptile by any means available could have had disastrous consequences in this busy and populated area."

He also defended his employee's decision to step on the python, saying "a foot is no different to a hand being used in an attempt to restrain a powerful animal... In fact, the human leg is stronger than the arm for this".

He added that the manager of the team that tackled the python was trained in snake-handling at the Singapore Zoo.

He said that even after their colleague was bitten, the team showed no "malice or cruelty" towards the snake, and their efforts were focused on preventing harm and containing the snake.

But veteran wildlife expert Subaraj Rajathurai, who has more than 25 years of field experience, said: "From the video, you can see the men did not respect the snake. They were just trying to assert their superiority over it. That's why a man got bitten. If you have a snake hook, as they did, and are trained, no one should get bitten."

Pointing out that workers in the zoo or the Animal Concerns Research and Education Society (Acres) have never resorted to using their feet to capture a snake, Mr Subaraj said the Anticimex staff showed a lack of training and knowledge.

Acres deputy chief executive Kalai Vanan said the area should have been cordoned off and people kept further away from the reptile.

Wildlife experts said the snake was likely hunting for food when it unexpectedly emerged from the drainage system connected to a nearby canal. Snakes, which are shy, tend to slither around in drainage systems to stay hidden from people, Nature Trekker founder Ben Lee said.

Co-founder of the Herpetological Society of Singapore Sankar Ananthanarayanan said reticulated pythons are highly adaptable to urbanised environments.

Their presence in urban areas helps ensure "sewers don't get overrun with rats", he added. "Pythons are often thought of as pests, but in truth, they are more like biological pest control."

The experts also said pest control firms should not be called in to handle snakes. People should call Acres and give information on the snake, such as its length, thickness and colour or markings.

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Lau Lee Hong
Embedded Software Engineer, GovTech
Alumnus, NUS Engineering
Alumnus, Singapore Polytechnic

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Changes to work injury law to improve insurance cover

Proposed amendments to help more workers get compensation for on-the-job injuries

Sue-Ann Tan

New measures are in the works to improve insurance coverage for employees and give those injured on the job greater assurance of compensation – and much sooner after an accident.

The proposals are among possi-

ble amendments to the Work Injury Compensation Act, which requires employers to compensate staff injured at work.

One change would broaden coverage to insure more employees.

Around 16,000 valid claims are lodged a year, with almost all receiving compensation under the Act.

Since 1995, employers have to

buy work injury compensation (WIC) insurance for those who do manual work and non-manual factory workers earning up to \$1,600 a month. The WIC provides greater assurance in the event that employers cannot pay compensation.

The proposals, which are open for public feedback, would mean non-manual employees not working in factories and who earn up to \$2,600 are also covered by WIC.

The Ministry of Manpower (MOM) said in a statement yesterday: “While the proposed amend-

ments may lead to higher WIC insurance premiums, the incremental cost is estimated to be manageable (at less than 0.01 per cent of annual total labour cost), with greater impact to companies with more injury claims.”

More than 24,000 uninsured workers will benefit from this expanded mandatory insurance coverage by April 2021.

The MOM also proposes to expand the scope of who gets compensation. Only injured employees on medical leave are now compen-

sated with their average monthly earnings. But the ministry said it “intends to expand compensation to those placed on light duties as a result of work injury, such that they are no worse off than those given medical leave”.

The Act will also lift maximum compensation levels by at least 10 per cent to keep pace with wage growth and rising medical costs.

An injured employee in the future will get up to \$45,000 for medical expenses within a year from the accident date, up from \$36,000 now.

Processing claims should also be faster with the proposed changes.

Since most injuries show their final extent within six months after an accident, compensation can be made based on that assessment. Claims made will also be processed by default, instead of getting the employee to file a claim separately.

About 1,300 claims a year, or 24 per cent of valid permanent incapacity claims, still take longer than six months to reach their conclusion, the MOM noted.

It added that future compensation can be made based on a multiple of the employee's basic monthly salary, which would cut delays arising from disputes over the salary used as the basis for compensation.

Some insurers will be licensed to sell and process all insured claims under the Act. WIC insurers now process only temporary incapacity claims, while MOM processes death and permanent incapacity claims.

The maximum fines for employers delaying or avoiding compensation will also be increased from \$10,000 to \$15,000.

Employment lawyer Wiyatno Gerald Mursjid said: “It is more in line with the spirit of the Act to ensure that more employees are required to be covered by insurance.

“The measures are towards a good purpose... but it will also be about how they're implemented.”

The document outlining the proposed changes is available on the Reach website from now to Feb 25.

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Surgeon who did not give sick leave fights conviction

Selina Lum
Law Correspondent

An orthopaedic surgeon found guilty of professional misconduct by a disciplinary tribunal for certifying a migrant worker fit for work one day after his collarbone operation has appealed against his conviction.

Dr Kevin Yip Man Hing did not give any sick leave to the 47-year-old construction worker, apart from the two days that the patient spent in hospital.

Instead, he certified that the Chinese national was fit for “light duties” upon discharge, as well as on two subsequent visits.

At his appeal before the Court of Three Judges yesterday, Dr Yip argued through his lawyer, Mr Navin Joseph Lobo, that the patient had agreed to go back to work and it was appropriate to give him light duties as the benefits of being mobile early enabled rehabilitation to begin sooner.

A disciplinary tribunal investigated the incident following a complaint to the Singapore Medical Council (SMC) by migrant worker rights group Humanitarian Organisation for Migration Economics (Home).

It handed down a five-month suspension to Dr Yip, 57, last year after finding he had “failed to ensure that adequate sick leave was given to (the patient) in light of his condition and the nature of his occupation”.

The SMC has also appealed against the sentence, arguing for a longer suspension of 18 months.

The worker was injured on July 7, 2011, when he fell from a one-storey height. He suffered a collarbone fracture, rib fractures and an injured wrist.

On the same day, Dr Yip, who has a private practice at Gleneagles Medical Centre, carried out surgery on the fractured collarbone. The operation stretched till the early hours of July 8 and the patient was discharged later that day. Dr Yip certified him fit for light duties from July 9.

The worker saw Dr Yip again on July 11 and July 18 for post-surgical reviews and was similarly certified fit for light duties.

The worker later sought medical attention at Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH).

During Dr Yip's disciplinary inquiry, several experts testified about the duration of medical leave that should be given.

SMC's expert said “a minimum of two weeks of sick leave should have been given at discharge with reassessment thereafter”.

SMC's lawyer, Ms Chang Man Phing from WongPartnership, said even though early mobilisation was beneficial, it did not mean the patient should have received “zero post-operative sick leave”. She argued that Dr Yip's lack of remorse, including omitting the rib fractures in his medical report and casting aspersions on the practice of TTSH doctors, warranted a heavier sentence.

The court will give its decision at a later date.

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Mr Ma'mun Suheimi received the Muis50 Contemporary Madrasah Leader Award and Ms Liyana Abdul Rahaim was presented with the Muis Social Work Study Award during the Madrasah Teachers Symposium at Suntec Convention Centre yesterday. ST PHOTO: KELVIN CHNG

Seven students get social work study award from Muis

Rahimah Rashith

As a child, Ms Liyana Abdul Rahaim watched as her parents struggled financially to support the family, which included her intellectually disabled elder brother, who uses a wheelchair. That experience spurred her to help people in need.

“Being part of a middle-income family trying to cope, I saw our struggles growing up. We had no financial assistance then and had to pay for the hospitalisation and rehabilitation of my brother along with our daily expenses. Because of that, I

want to help other families,” said the 30-year-old, who has two children of her own now.

The Islamic law and jurisprudence graduate from Al-Azhar University in Egypt, who has worked with organisations such as community self-help group Mendaki and educational institution Simply Islam, joined the Social Service Institute last year to do a part-time course for a diploma in social service. She is now a community engagement executive with the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (Muis).

“Graduates from religious backgrounds like me usually pursue

teaching. But I see social work can also complement my religious background,” she said.

Yesterday, Ms Liyana and six other students received the Muis Social Work Study Award during the Madrasah Teachers Symposium at Suntec Convention Centre.

The award is for students of social work and social service studies who, upon graduation, contribute to the development of the Muslim community, said Muis chief executive Esa Masood in his opening speech.

Last year, Muis said it had set aside \$150,000 until 2020 for the award. Bursary distributing organi-

sation Lembaga Biasiswa Kenangan Maulud administers the funds. The first batch of seven students yesterday received between \$5,000 and \$10,000 each.

At the symposium, Muis also presented the Muis50 Contemporary Madrasah Leader Awards to six individuals who contributed towards the progress and achievements of madrasahs. All had served as chairmen, committee members or principals of madrasahs for a continuous period of at least 15 years.

Mr Esa said the award recipients had improved Islamic education here. “They drove initiatives in the

early years and some continue to contribute in different capacities to the madrasah sector today.”

The guest of honour at the symposium was Minister-in-charge of the Muslim Affairs and Minister for the Environment and Water Resources Masagos Zulkifli.

“We are very fortunate to have the local madrasah system, which existed even before independence, when the British were here. And they have been producing religious teachers suited to the needs of our local community,” he said.

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Standards drawn up for safe use of fully autonomous vehicles

Zhaki Abdullah

A set of standards to make fully autonomous vehicles safe to use here has been created, spelling out expectations such as how fast such vehicles should travel and the space between them on the road.

Enterprise Singapore said yesterday that Technical Reference 68 (TR 68), a set of guidelines covering

areas such as vehicle behaviour and safety as well as cyber security, is intended for fully autonomous vehicles that do not require human monitoring or intervention.

Currently, the ones being tested here, in places such as the one-north business district, all need a safety driver, who takes control of the vehicle if necessary.

The Road Traffic Act was amended in 2017 to better regulate the trials of autonomous vehicles, which are part of the Government's drive towards a car-lite future as they can provide travel on demand, reducing the need for private car ownership.

In 2014, the Committee on Autonomous Road Transport for Singapore (Carts) was formed to chart the direction of self-driving technology here.

Singapore has been an early champion of the technology and was last year ranked first among 20



A self-driving car by start-up nuTonomy. Enterprise Singapore said yesterday that Technical Reference 68, a set of guidelines covering areas such as vehicle behaviour and safety as well as cyber security, is intended for fully autonomous vehicles that do not require human monitoring or intervention. ST FILE PHOTO

countries for policy and legislation regarding self-driving vehicles in KPMG's Autonomous Vehicles Readiness Index.

The publication of TR 68 comes after a year of discussions between representatives from the autonomous vehicle industry, government agencies, as well as research institutions and institutes of higher learning.

“As a provisional standard, TR 68

will continue to undergo refinement as autonomous vehicle technology matures, with feedback from the industry,” said Enterprise Singapore. “The feedback gathered will be used to review TR 68 as it is eventually expanded to cover other aspects of autonomous vehicle development and deployment.”

Associate Professor Marcelo Ang, director of the National University

of Singapore's Advanced Robotics Centre, said: “While they are not rules yet, these guidelines can be a basis for regulators in formulating regulations for such vehicles.”

The standards will also be a point of reference for firms that make autonomous vehicles, he said.

ST Engineering Land Systems chief robotics engineer Tan Nai Kwan said the new standards were much welcomed by industry players as they provide developers with clear guidelines benchmarked against international standards.

This will help ensure a smooth transition as autonomous vehicles move from the development stage to real-world use, he added.

Prof Ang said it is difficult to say how long it will take for fully autonomous vehicles to be commonplace on roads here. But he noted that organisations here were working hard to make such vehicles a reality by 2022, when driverless shuttles will be tested in three areas – Punggol, Tengah and the Jurong Innovation District – for residents on their daily commute.

Permanent Secretary for Transport Loh Ngai Seng, who chairs Carts, said he hoped that TR 68 will “guide industry players in the safe and effective deployment of autonomous vehicles in Singapore”.

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Health programme for hawker centre workers

Rei Kurohi

Older workers at 15 hawker centres, including hawkers, cleaners and shopkeepers, will enjoy free health checks and health coaching at their workplaces as part of an expanded programme launched by the Health Promotion Board (HPB) on Wednesday.

Health Chats @ Hawker Centres, which was piloted in five hawker centres last year, will be rolled out to another 10 by March 2020.

The programme consists of monthly 15-minute, health-check and coaching sessions over six months.

Workers can join the session each month when they have free time during the work day, between 10am to 5pm. The HPB's health coaches will measure their body mass index (BMI) and blood pressure.

The coaching covers both health and safety topics, including chronic disease prevention and management, ergonomic lifting techniques and low-impact exercises. Information booklets containing safety tips are also distributed to the workers.

The programme was piloted at Tiong Bahru Market, Geylang Serai, ABC Brickworks, 85 Redhill Lane and Tekka Centre from last June. The workers there are still enjoying the service.

The HPB said it is in talks with hawker associations to roll out the programme at 10 other hawker centres, including Chinatown Complex, Old Airport Road, Pasar 16 @ Bedok and Golden Mile Food Centre.



The public trying out the towel exercise at the launch of the Health Promotion Board's Health Chats @ Hawker Centres on Wednesday. The programme targets mature hawker centre workers, who tend to have limited access to health checks and health and safety coaching due to their unstructured work patterns, long hours and short breaks. ST PHOTO: KELVIN CHNG

In a statement, the HPB and the Workplace Safety and Health Council said: "Amid a greying workforce, the programme will provide hard-to-reach mature workers in the less structured food and beverage, retail and cleaning sectors convenient access to health checks, as well as health and safety coaching."

"This is important as most of the mature workers in hawker centres – the hawkers, market shop retailers and cleaners – tend to have limited access to health and safety programmes due to their unstructured work patterns, long shift hours and short rest breaks."

The pilot programme benefited more than 2,900 workers. According to the HPB, about three-quarters of those who had body pain said they experienced a reduction in pain and 80 per cent

had adopted healthier habits such as eating more vegetables and cutting back on sugary drinks. About 20 per cent increased their physical activity, while 30 per cent of the overweight participants saw an improvement in their BMI.

On Wednesday, Senior Minister of State for Health Amy Khor, Minister of State for Manpower Zaqu Mo-

hamad and Tanjong Pagar GRC MP Melvin Yong were at Tekka Centre for the launch of the programme.

They are part of the Tripartite Oversight Committee on Workplace Safety and Health.

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Nine companies pledge to cut plastic use

They sign WWF action plan to reduce, reuse and recycle plastic, support research projects

Timothy Goh

Nine companies here have pledged to go beyond simply banning plastic straws to take more targeted measures to reduce plastic use.

One of them, Wildlife Reserves Singapore, for instance, has committed to completely eliminating single-use plastics from its supply chain by 2025, with some exceptions for reasons such as safety.

The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) announced yesterday that the nine companies are signatories to its Plastic Action, or Pact, initiative.

The other eight are AccorHotels Group, Hilton Singapore, Pontiac Land Group, Ramada and Days Hotels by Wyndham Singapore at Zhongshan Park, Pastamania, Kraftwich, SaladStop! and Udders.

The companies are committed to taking measures to cut plastic use

within the stipulated time frames they set, starting with the removal of unnecessary plastics from their operations.

They will take responsibility for the use of plastic beyond the point of sale, by collecting and recycling more plastics than they produce.

They will review the designs and types of plastics used in their products to ensure more emphasis is placed on making them reusable and recyclable.

They will also support a range of conservation and research projects, which may involve finding better materials for their plastics, improving waste management or removing plastics from nature.

However, the companies do not have to eliminate plastics entirely.

There will be exceptions, such as using cling wrap for hygiene purposes during food preparation.

Elaborating on this, a WWF spokesman said: "We recognise that certain plastics are still essential."

"The commitments are aimed at eliminating excessive or unnecessary plastic use by businesses, while switching to plant-based plastic or alternative materials that are more sustainable."

WWF Singapore chief of strategic communication and external relations Kim Stengert said that signatories to Pact are making an "ambitious and science-based" commitment to systemic change.

Supported by the National Environment Agency, Pact builds on

WWF's vision of no plastics in nature by 2030.

WWF said that addressing the use of plastics by businesses is key to addressing the crisis of plastic pollution as 80 per cent of plastics in the ocean are believed to come from

Companies do not have to eliminate plastics entirely. There will be exceptions, such as using cling wrap for hygiene purposes during food preparation.

land sources.

It is estimated that by 2050, there could be more plastic in the ocean than fish by weight, with potential implications for human health and well-being.

WWF added that studies have found microplastics in the gut of one in four fish, in the tap water samples of 14 countries and even in the air.

Last year, KFC, Burger King and Resorts World Sentosa stopped providing plastic straws as part of steps to reduce the use of disposable plastics, while Yakult Singapore encouraged consumers of its probiotic milk drink to take it straight from the bottle.

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SIA Girl still current, says airline after brand review

Karamjit Kaur
Senior Aviation Correspondent

She may be almost 50 but the Singapore Girl remains current and continues to set Singapore Airlines (SIA) apart from its rivals, the airline said following a brand review.

"As we carried out our review, it was clear that our underlying branding approach, which consists of the iconic Singapore Girl and an emphasis on customer service as a crucial differentiator, remains current and continues to set us apart in our industry," said Mr Campbell Wilson, SIA's senior vice-president for sales and marketing.

SIA announced yesterday that after a six-month hunt, it has picked two agencies under American media firm Omnicom Group – TBWA and PHD – for creative and media services. The appointment will take effect on April 1 and the contract will be for five years, SIA said.

A total of 11 agency groups had put in a bid for the business, including the incumbent agencies for creative and media services, TBWA and Zenith, respectively.

TBWA and PHD will jointly provide overall strategy, creative and media planning as well as content narrative solutions under one holding group, aimed at enhanced strategic marketing communications.

Mr Wilson said: "We are confident that TBWA and PHD will now be able to creatively execute that

promise with a more modern touch, bringing about an evolution in our branding and marketing communications."

The appointed agencies will primarily support the Singapore head office, but also service all other key markets. The six regional hubs are South-east Asia, North Asia, South-west Pacific, Europe, West Asia and Africa, and the United States.

In launching the pitch last year, SIA had said it was looking for a partner or partners to "help us cut through the changing marketing and communications landscape with impact, so as to elevate our iconic brand as we continue to spread our wings globally".

The brand review comes amid a three-year transformation programme SIA embarked on in 2017, recognising the need to reposition itself in the face of challenges as the global competition intensified.

A big part of the transformation is a push for innovation and smart solutions to improve business operations and customer service.

On Tuesday, the airline officially opened its new innovation hub, KrisLab, at SIA Group Sports Club near Changi Airport. The idea is to give staff a workspace to develop innovative ideas and co-innovate with external partners, start-ups, established incubators and accelerators.

It is part of SIA's Digital Innovation Blueprint launched a year ago.

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5 skincare creams have harmful ingredients: HSA

It promised to give users "white, fluffy, glowing skin" and claimed that it was made from "100 per cent natural ingredients".

In fact, it contained mercury levels more than 40,000 times over permissible limits.

The Health Sciences Authority (HSA) issued an alert yesterday on Deeja Cosmetic Wrinkle cream, as well as four similar products. They are Deeja Cosmetic Sun cream, Deeja Cosmetic Dream cream, RDL Babyface Whitening Cream Night Cream 5 in 1 and RDL Face Off Fade-Out Cream Day Cream 5 in 1.

All five were tested and found to contain undeclared potent ingredients such as hydroquinone, a skin-lightening agent prohibited in over-the-counter skincare cosmetic products, as well as mercury, a toxic metal.

HSA warned that long-term exposure to high amounts of mercury could cause serious health risks, including damage to the kidneys, digestive and nervous systems. It said hydroquinone is a prescription-only medicine and should be used only under medical supervision. Inappropriate use could result in rashes, skin redness, tingling and burning of skin.

The three Deeja creams, which falsely claimed to be "made and specially formulated from 100 per cent natural ingredients", are part of the Deeja Cosmetic box set sold on local online platforms.

The RDL creams were imported

by Arklife Distributors and sold in retail outlets. HSA has directed Arklife Distributors to stop the sale of these creams and recall the affected products from retail outlets. The RDL creams were also sold on online platforms by other sellers.

HSA said it has told administrators of online platforms which were selling the Deeja and RDL creams to remove the listings of all the affected products.

HSA advised users of the five products to stop doing so immediately and consult a doctor if they experience adverse effects. It said consumers should be wary of products that promise quick and miraculous effects or carry exaggerated claims as they may contain prohibited harmful ingredients. Consumers should also exercise caution when buying health products online.

Sellers and suppliers must stop selling these products immediately as they are illegal products. Those found guilty can be jailed for up to three years, fined up to \$100,000, or both.

Anyone who has information on the sale and supply of these illegal products may contact HSA's Enforcement Branch on 6866-3485 during office hours on weekdays or e-mail hsa_js@hsa.gov.sg

To learn about the risks associated with buying health products, view this video produced by the HSA: youtu.be/dmj1_bSgJgA

Timothy Goh

Spring S'pore exec admits to duping agency of \$155,000

Charges include forgery and cheating for claims under innovation scheme for SMEs

Shaffiq Alkhatib

A senior executive at Spring Singapore abused his position and master-minded a ruse to dupe the statutory board into disbursing nearly \$155,000. Leong Weng Cheou, who roped in four friends for the scam, received over \$77,000 of this amount.

Leong, 46, pleaded guilty in court yesterday to 18 counts of forgery and 12 cheating charges. The court heard that 105 other similar charges will be taken into consideration during sentencing. He committed his offences in 2015 and 2016.

Spring Singapore, an agency aimed at helping Singapore enterprises grow, is now known as Enterprise SG, the court heard.

While working for Spring Singapore, his duties included assessing applications and claims for the Innovation and Capability Voucher (ICV). Each voucher worth \$5,000 was given to small and medium-sized enterprises to encourage them to develop their capabilities in five categories – innovation, productivity, human resource, financial management and solutions.

Deputy Public Prosecutor Norman Yew said the ICV scheme operated on a "reimbursement basis". Applications were submitted online for Spring Singapore's approval to buy an item or service from a "solution provider", he added. Each application must be accompanied by documents, including a quotation from the vendor.

Once approved, an applicant could make the purchase before submitting a claim for disbursement, with supporting invoice and proof of payment. Applicants would receive their disbursements after the claim was approved.

In 2015, Leong hatched a plan to defraud the agency by using false documents to deceive it into disbursing money to shell business entities. He roped four Singaporean friends – Lionel Wong Yong Jun, 35, Soh Eng Luan, 38, Mary Heah Hwee Hoong, 41, and Wong Ping Ling, 44 – into the scam.

The DPP said: "To carry out the plan, Leong engaged in four separate conspiracies with each of his four friends to register multiple shell business entities and forge supporting documents for the sole purpose of submitting fictitious ICV applications and claims to obtain the ICV moneys."

"There were... 31 successful fraudulent claims which amounted to \$154,999.63, which Spring was deceived into paying out."

In late 2017, Leong had a meeting with his four friends as he knew that Spring Singapore's auditing processes would eventually uncover the ruse. The court heard that Soh later consulted a lawyer and lodged a police report, admitting that she had conspired with Leong to cheat Spring Singapore.

Leong, who is represented by defence lawyer T.M. Sinnadurai, is expected to be sentenced on Feb 21.

For each cheating charge, he can be jailed for up to 10 years and fined. The cases involving his four friends are still pending.

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Couples lose \$57k after Aisle Bridal's sudden closure: Case

Ng Huiwen

Singapore's consumer watchdog has issued an alert against The Aisle Bridal after receiving 26 complaints since November over its sudden closure.

Brides- and grooms-to-be have lost at least \$56,770 in prepayments to The Aisle Bridal Boutique and The Aisle Bridal Studio, the Consumers Association of Singapore (Case) said yesterday.

The 26 complaints were made between Nov 7 and yesterday.

Consumers claimed that the bridal boutique's previous owners and representatives had suddenly become uncontactable.

Then, they were told that a new company had taken over the premises of The Aisle Bridal, and they would have to pay an additional amount of between \$900 and \$2,250 to proceed with the original wedding packages they had signed up for.

The registered office address of The Aisle Bridal is at Townerville at 59 McNair Road.

A check of what appears to be its official Facebook page showed that the company was started in 2005. The last post was made on Sept 25 last year.

Its services included wedding packages, gown rental, pre-wedding photography and videography, and "Korean concept" photo-shoots.

Case said in its statement that affected consumers may file a claim at the Small Claims Tribunals and that the business is still live on the Accounting and Corporate Regulatory Authority's register.

Case also encouraged consumers to consider buying insurance that covers business insolvency when they take up bridal packages.

This will ensure that their prepayments are protected if the bridal agency closes down abruptly, it said.

In addition, consumers should do their own research on whether the bridal agency has a good track record of delivering its services promptly and effectively.

The public can visit the Case website for more tips on what to look out for when engaging a bridal agency.

Those who need further help may approach Case at its hotline on 6100-0315 or at its website, www.case.org.sg

The Straits Times' attempts to contact The Aisle Bridal have been unsuccessful so far.

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Real-life abuse stories shared at ST Book Club

Olivia Ho

A woman lost her job because her boyfriend showed up at her workplace, saw her talking to another man and beat the pair up.

Another woman's husband poked her in the eyes, ears and nose with chopsticks because she was too busy to go out with him.

These were among the shocking stories of real-life abuse shared by social workers from family violence specialist centre Pave at The Straits Times Book Club on Wednesday.

About 140 people at the club's 10th edition at the National Library Building listened to accounts from When Love Hurts, a collection of true stories of domestic violence, compiled by Dr Sudha Nair, Pave's executive director, and her team.

In the session, moderated by journalist and former deputy editor of The Straits Times Alan John, social workers Saravanan Krishnan, Adisti Jalani and Soh Siew Fong discussed helping people deal with domestic violence.

Abuse can be not just physical but also psychological and happen in as well as outside a marriage, they said. Unmarried victims are especially vulnerable, noted Mr John, as they cannot apply for a Personal Protection Order from the court.

Ms Adisti discussed why people stay in violent relationships, some-



(From left) Pave social workers Saravanan Krishnan, Adisti Jalani and Soh Siew Fong, and former ST deputy editor Alan John discussed helping people deal with domestic violence and counselling abusers. ST PHOTO: DESMOND WEE

times for years, and in some cases, marry their abusers.

"What we don't see is the grip of fear," she said, adding that a victim may stay for many reasons: They could be dependent on their abusers for income or status; their abusers may threaten their families; or they simply believe their abusers "didn't mean it".

They also shared the process of counselling abusers – most of whom are men – and helping them understand and unlearn violence.

The session deeply affected retired businesswoman Rebecca Teo, 61. "I didn't realise the prevalence of such abuse. We need information like this about what is happening and how we can help."

The book club runs every last Wednesday of the month. At the next session on Feb 27, Dr William Wan will speak with Straits Times journalist Lee Siew Hua about his new book, Through the Valley, on the grace of ageing and dying well. Readers can register at str.sg/o6ZP.

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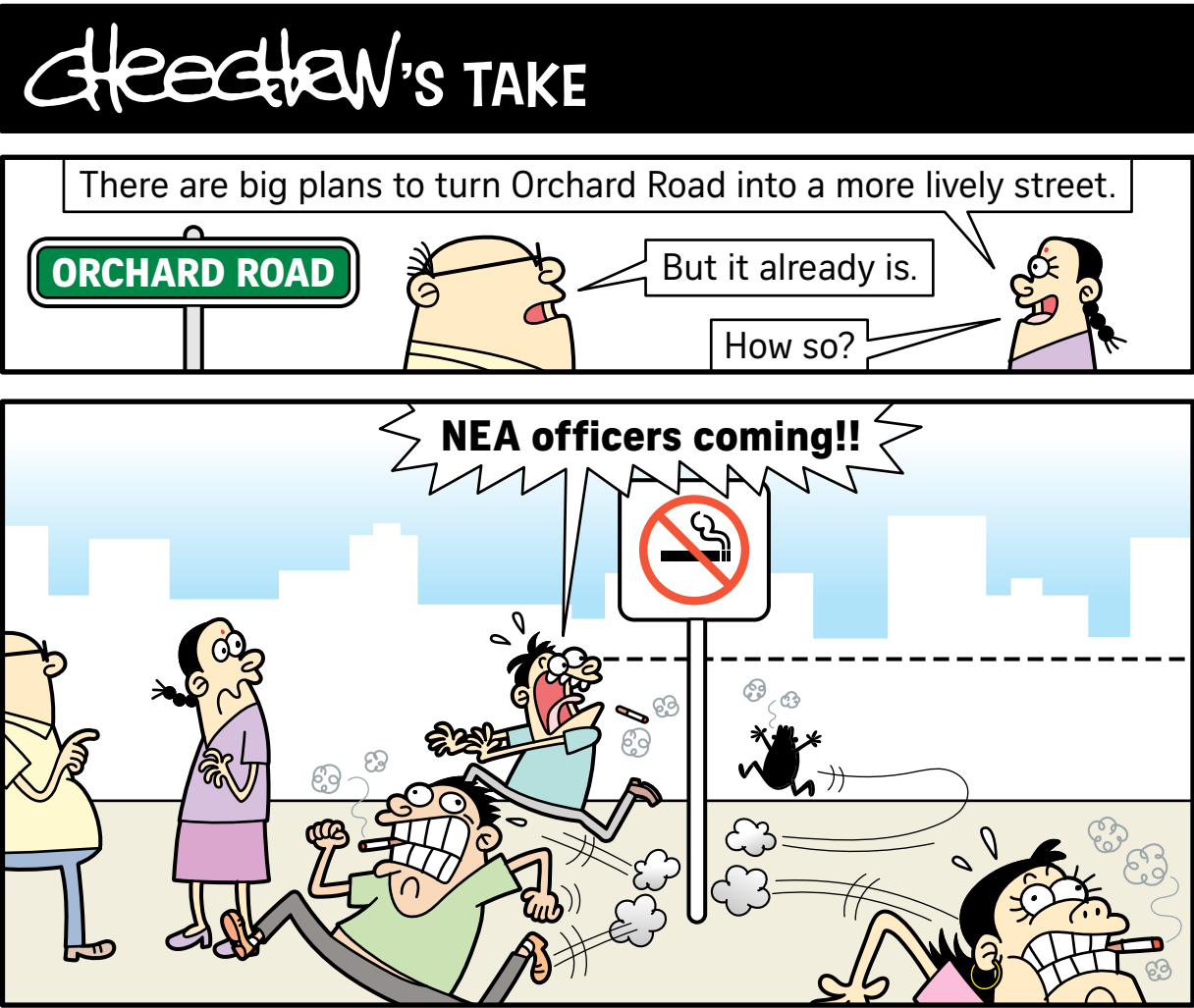
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FORUM



Focus on developing local R&D capabilities

Dyson's decision to move its head office to Singapore and its earlier announcement to set up its electric car plant here smack of an outdated strategy put in place by the Economic Development Board (EDB) in 1968 (Dyson's move a sign of S'pore's attractiveness to global firms, Jan 24; and Bladeless-fan maker Dyson to make electric cars in S'pore, Oct 24, 2018).

Fifty years on, it is clear that the strategy which served us well in the past – getting multinational firms to move their manufacturing operations here, which often did not include their research and development capabilities – is no longer relevant to modern Singapore.

Global firms such as Dyson make such moves only because they stand to benefit from tax exemptions and subsidies from the Government. And when these tax exemptions and subsidies are no longer available, they will move their operations out.

That is exactly what happened to the electronics industry in Singapore, which was at one point a major electronics manufacturing hub.

We were No.1 for semiconductor assembly and testing, and the top disk drive manufacturing location in the world.

Today, the electronics industry here has been hollowed out because we never managed to attract the integrated circuit and disk drive R&D work to the island.

This is not the case for the South Koreans and Taiwanese, who remain major players in the electronics industry because they developed their local R&D capabilities.

Dyson has made it clear that its higher-value R&D roles will remain in Britain. Years ago, Fairchild Semiconductor, National Semiconductor and Texas Instrument, among others, said the same thing.

The first generation of EDB officers did well in getting multinational companies to move their manufacturing operations to Singapore. The current generation of officers need to get multinational firms to move their higher-value R&D to Singapore, failing which they should offer the same incentives to local companies.

Developing local R&D capabilities will better serve the long-term needs of our country.

Liu Fook Thim

MOE should ban draconian attire checks

While it is understandable for schools to maintain a strict dress code for students' appearance, such as the colour of their shoes and hairstyles, to do a spot check on undergarments is humiliating and uncalled for (Nanyang Girls' High apologises after attire check made students 'feel uncomfortable'; Jan 29).

What are the Ministry of Education's (MOE) guidelines on modesty?

What the Nanyang Girls' High School (NYGH) teacher did appears to amount to outrage of modesty and sexual harassment. If nothing else, it seems to be a blatant intrusion on privacy.

It is not enough for the school and its principal to apologise, because such actions were unnecessary and caused embarrassment to students and their parents.

Parents have the right to protect their children's modesty.

What signal does it send when a teacher is allowed to unbutton students' uniforms and tug at their bra straps?

It is startling to learn that NYGH goes as far as to dictate what colour of undergarments students are allowed to wear. Such regulations seem over the top. Inspections of this sort should be conducted only when the school has reason to believe that its uniform policy has been broken, and even then should be done only in private.

Draconian attire checks such as those on students' undergarments undermine their self-esteem and may have lasting mental damage.

MOE should ban such archaic school regulations; there is a limit to enforcing discipline.

Cheng Choon Fei

Encourage students who are wronged to speak up

The recent report (Nanyang Girls' High apologises after attire check made students 'feel uncomfortable'; Jan 29) should raise concerns about more than just attire checks.

The report said that although several students posted about the incident on social media expressing their disappointment at the way the spot checks were conducted, "many of these postings have since been removed".

Nanyang Girls' High School (NYGH) should clarify whether the postings were removed by the students voluntarily or if the students were advised to do so.

Students should be encouraged to speak up whenever they encounter incidents which make them feel uncomfortable.

At the start of each academic year, schools spend time and effort to educate their students on their vision, mission and motto as well as the students' code of conduct.

But informing students about their rights, the various avenues to seek help and their freedom to speak up if anyone makes them feel uncomfortable in any situation is often not done.

Schools should encourage their students to speak up if they encounter any situation which affects them negatively.

The students of NYGH who posted about the incident on social media did the right thing. By not keeping silent, they brought to light an incident which the school had to address and apologise for.

The question regarding the removal of the NYGH students' social media postings about the incident still remains. It is hoped that this can be addressed adequately.

Yong Su Lin (Ms)

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Build trust in relationship between doctors and patients

Trust is a necessary ingredient of any healthy relationship, whether between friends, spouses or a government and its citizens.

The more trust there is between parties, the less of an explanation will be required.

The selection, training and registration of doctors recognise the importance of trust in the doctor-patient relationship.

They do their best to ensure that doctors have high ethical standards and continue to maintain them but, unfortunately, this cannot be guaranteed.

Society is moving away from a paternalistic doctor-patient

relationship to one in which the patient exercises his right to make decisions.

Obviously, this is not possible in an asymmetrical relationship unless the doctor shares information with the patient.

The modified Montgomery test is meant to ensure this, but how effective or achievable is it?

Is a crash course in the patient's condition encompassing every treatment option and potential complication what a sick person really wants or needs?

This is clearly not a case of one-size-fits-all.

A patient may already have had a long relationship built on trust with

his doctor, and prefer to leave decisions largely to the doctor.

Others may not easily understand the lengthy and complicated explanations required for their conditions, or have conditions so acute that not enough time is available for a full explanation.

We should work towards a relationship in which the doctor is empathetic enough to give the patient sufficient information to guide him in making decisions, but not so much that the patient becomes overwhelmed.

The patient should also not choose a doctor that he does not trust, and must

recognise that trust has to be built up on both sides.

An unimaginative and unempathetic use of the Montgomery test can result in an erosion of the doctor-patient relationship.

It can also result in doctors practising defensive or adversarial medicine.

This is not what society wants, but that is the message being sent by the Singapore Medical Council's (SMC) \$100,000 fine.

Surely the SMC can make better use of the Montgomery test to foster good doctor-patient relationships?

Geh Min (Dr)

Tap pharmacists to explain side effects

The recent disquiet within the medical fraternity over doctors having to explain the side effects of medication or risk being censured (4,000 sign petition over SMC ruling; Jan 26) seems to overlook the role of pharmacists, who are a key part of the healthcare setting and whose

expertise lies in knowledge of medication.

We should leverage Singapore's highly trained pharmacists by giving them a distinct role in dispensing drugs to patients that is separate from the medical consultation done by doctors.

Leave the explanation of side

effects to the pharmacists, and let the doctors focus on practising medicine.

With clearly defined roles, doctors need not fear practising defensive medicine, and patients benefit from the pharmacists' value-added service.

Lee Yong Se

MOH needs to implement strategies to prevent mishaps

News of the HIV Registry leak comes as a surprise, and may have a negative impact on Singapore's economy, given our attempts to promote the country as a hub for data centres in Asia (Data of 14,200 people with HIV leaked online by US fraudster; Jan 29).

This is already the third high-profile mishap under the

Ministry of Health (MOH) in recent years, after the SingHealth data breach last year and the hepatitis C outbreak at the Singapore General Hospital in 2015 due to poor infection control practices.

One has to question how this latest leak occurred in the first place, given that the culprits had already been caught and punished.

Perhaps the authorities involved in the investigation missed something in the process of questioning the culprits.

Singapore needs more than just another MOH apology. Strategies must be put in place to prevent incidents like these from happening again.

Gabriel Ong

Excerpts from readers' letters

GIVE PDPC WIDER MANDATE

I have recently been inundated with SMS and WhatsApp messages, as well as phone calls offering illegal loans and online gambling services, even though my number is listed in the Do Not Call Registry.

The Personal Data Protection Commission (PDPC) does not deal with such marketing calls, and will refer all such complaints to the police. I have filed several complaints via the I-Witness website, but have not seen any follow-up action.

Police resources should not be used on investigating personal complaints like these, though the service being offered may itself be illegal. The PDPC should be given a wider mandate to investigate and bar these people from contacting those on the DNC Registry.

Chan Meng Sun

COLONIAL OPPRESSION OVERBLOWN

Whatever the rights and wrongs of British colonisation in the region (Colonisation didn't crush Singapore's fighting spirit, by Mr Anthony Oei; Jan 25), it is true that a number of South-east Asian countries turned to their former colonial power for armed assistance in times of trouble, and have had no issues with availing themselves of Britain's world-class learning institutions.

Some of the most beautiful and iconic buildings in Singapore and Malaysia were from the colonial era, and remain standing to this day. If colonisation was as bad as Mr Oei makes it sound, why weren't they torn down?

Gordon McLean

WHERE ARE THE BIKE PARKING ZONES?

The Land Transport Authority (LTA) finally introduced its new measures requiring shared bicycles to be parked in designated zones, but there seems to be an obvious flaw that needs to be addressed.

The LTA has not released an accessible map of these designated parking zones, making finding them akin to a treasure hunt with no clues.

The LTA needs to make it easier for users to find these zones, especially for areas that they are unfamiliar with.

Rahul Gupta

MANDATORY NS FOR PR APPLICANTS

Permanent residency status in Singapore is highly sought after, and while some do cherish and value being a PR, others have ulterior motives for taking it up.

After reaping the benefits from the Singapore system, they renounce their PR status and return to their home countries, especially when it is time to fulfil their national service obligations.

I would go even further than Mr Tan Soon Hock and say that we should bar such former PRs who dodge NS from entering Singapore altogether (Bar ex-PRs who dodge NS from working here; Jan 24).

And to prevent foreigners from taking Singapore for a ride, I suggest that future PR applicants should be made to serve their NS obligations first.

Pavithran Vidyadharan



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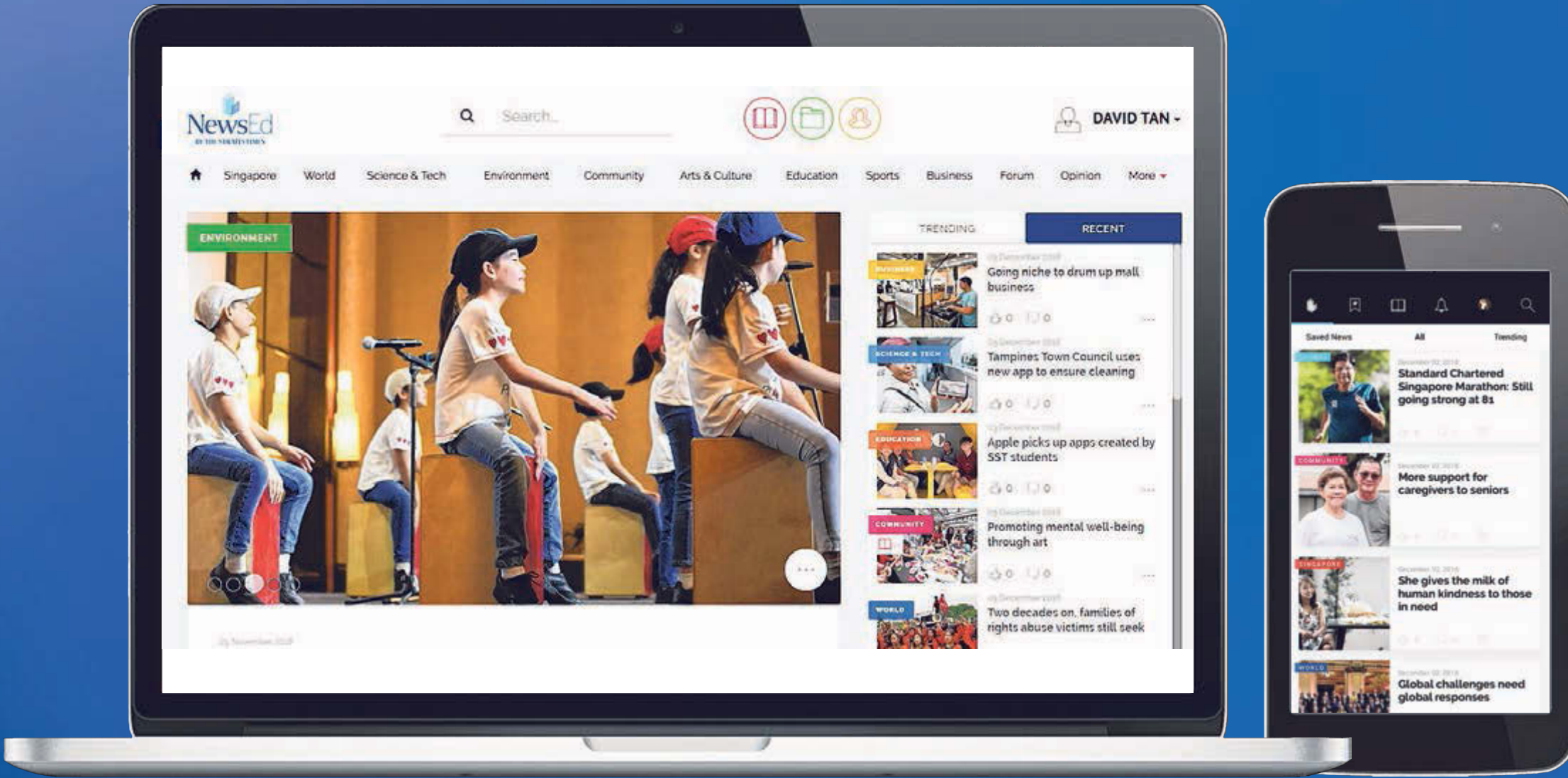
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Ending on a high

A Nanyang Polytechnic student in "sky-running" gear leaping into the air at the end of the Chingay parade in 2009. Over the years, Chingay has evolved into a grand, colourful parade featuring a range of performances.

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MORE MANUFACTURERS EXPECTING WEAKER BUSINESS CONDITIONS IN THE FIRST HALF C2



Manpower Ministry figures show that employed Singaporeans and permanent residents worked an average of 43 hours a week last year. This has come down from 43.2 hours in 2017 and a high of 46.6 hours in 2010. The fall last year was due to a slight decrease in hours among people working full time, as well as a rising share of part-timers in the workforce, says the ministry. ST PHOTO: KELVIN CHNG

Workers clock fewer hours over eight years: Report

Flexible options, technology see average work week shorten to 43 hours in 2018

Joanna Seow
Manpower Correspondent

As more people choose part-time work and are aided in their jobs by technology, the average number of hours worked per week has been falling over the past eight years. An annual report on the resident labour force in Singapore, released by the Ministry of Manpower yesterday, showed that employed Singaporeans and permanent residents worked an average of 43

hours a week last year. This has come down from 43.2 hours in 2017 and a high of 46.6 hours in 2010. The fall last year was due to a slight decrease in hours among people working full time, as well as a rising share of part-timers in the workforce, said the ministry. The figure is for the usual hours worked a week, which covers a typical weekly work schedule, including regular overtime hours, even if workers are not paid for them. But some industries still had a higher than average share of work-

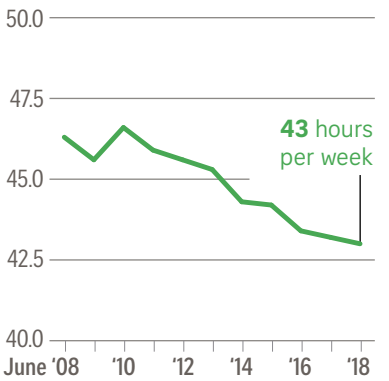
ers pulling long hours. Nearly three in 10 workers in the transportation and storage industry, such as taxi drivers, worked more than 48 hours a week last year. About one in four workers in financial and insurance services and food and beverage services also did so. People with relatively long hours include financial and investment advisers, financial analysts, chefs, cooks and hawkers. Singapore Business Federation chairman Teo Siong Seng said there have been more efforts in recent years to encourage part-time work and other flexible arrangements to bring older workers and mothers back into the workforce. "If the hours are shorter but more workers

are available, it would still be all right for businesses. At the same time, they have to see how to adapt and improve productivity," he said. Human resources experts find the trend encouraging. "Shorter work hours may mean refreshed and motivated employees, increased efficiency and thus productivity, which, in turn, benefit businesses," said Adecco Singapore country manager Mark Hall. Mr Josh Border, Randstad's director for sales, marketing, human resources and secretarial divisions, said businesses can continue to lower the number of hours worked by investing in digital tools and in-

MORE PART-TIMERS continued on C2

Less time

MEAN USUAL HOURS WORKED PER WEEK



Note: Data excludes full-time national servicemen.

Source: MINISTRY OF MANPOWER
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Manufacturing and services downbeat about first half

Surveys by EDB and SingStat tally with private research on local business mood

Ng Jun Sen
Business Correspondent

Manufacturing and services firms are more pessimistic about their prospects for the first half of this year, two separate government surveys have shown.

Both confirm private research on business sentiment for the year.

Overall, manufacturers' predict

that business conditions will worsen from January to June this year, data released yesterday by the Economic Development Board (EDB) showed.

A net-weighted balance of 14 per cent of manufacturers are anticipating a less favourable business situation, a much gloomier outcome than in the previous quarterly survey when the figure was just 1 per cent.

A separate survey by the Depart-

ment of Statistics (SingStat) found that in the services sector, a net-weighted balance of 4 per cent of firms expected business conditions to worsen in the next six months.

This is the first time since the second quarter of 2017 that overall business sentiment among services firms has slipped into pessimism.

The net-weighted balance is the difference between the proportion of optimistic and pessimistic firms polled by the two agencies.

Both surveys found mostly negative sentiment in different industries in both sectors, though there were some bright sparks in some.

Sentiment was especially poor among the electronics industry within manufacturing. A net-weighted balance of 45 per cent of firms took a downbeat view of January to June this year, compared with the fourth quarter of 2018.

Precision-engineering companies which had mounting worries over global trade tensions foresaw weaker orders amid a softening demand for semiconductors and related equipment.

On balance, 24 per cent of precision-engineering firms were less optimistic about the first half of this year relative to the last quarter of 2018.

However, EDB's survey found that firms in the biomedical manufacturing and the transport-engineering industries were bullish about their prospects as demand for medical technology and marine and offshore engineering are expected to remain robust.

Overall, a net-weighted balance of 2 per cent of manufacturers expected output to decrease in the first quarter of this year. A weighted 84 per cent expected hiring to remain at a similar level to the previous quarter.

Dr Tan Khay Boon, senior lecturer at SIM Global Education, said the gloomy outlook among manufacturers was due to global uncertainties, such as trade tensions and a disorderly Brexit. These, he added, negatively impacted on exports that the sector depends on.

Within the services sector, the downbeat included those in wholesale trade, real estate and financial and insurance industries, while food and beverage services and info-comms services remained upbeat.

In particular, the wholesale trade,

and the financial and insurance industry, were pessimistic in the light of the ongoing United States-China trade conflict, said SingStat.

The results confirm the gloomy outlook for all firms – not just in manufacturing and services – for the whole of this year that was apparent in the Singapore Business Federation's (SBF) annual National Business Survey of more than 700 firms released last month.

It showed that around 84 per cent of firms believed that the business environment would remain the same or become worse this year, up from 66 per cent for last year.

SBF chief executive Ho Meng Kit, speaking at a seminar on the business outlook for 2019 yesterday, said negative business sentiments would make it harder for firms to develop their workforce and implement innovations due to their limited time and financial resources.

He added that only 12 per cent of all firms had invested in better training for staff in the past year.

ngjunsen@sph.com.sg

Research centre to help people manage money in real-time

Aw Cheng Wei

Nanyang Technological University (NTU) and China's first digital-only bank have opened a research centre to help customers manage their money in real-time wherever they are.

NTU research scientists and engineers from WeBank will also study how to provide personalised wealth management advice to customers, among other projects, in the five-year partnership.

Cutting-edge tech like blockchain and the Internet of Things will come under the microscope as well.

Mr Lawrence Wong, Second Minister for Finance, told the opening ceremony at NTU yesterday that the Internet, smartphones and social media are changing the way financial companies serve and interact with customers.

Industry players from start-ups to banks are embracing fintech to keep up with the changes, added Mr Wong, who is also the National Development Minister.

"Fintech is now the buzzword within the industry, it's not just a backroom activity, it's not just something confined to start-ups."

One example involves financial advisers working with robo-advisors to provide investment advice, while bank officers are teaming up with chatbots to serve customers and artificial intelligence is used to detect fraud.

Rapid changes in the financial industry may bring about "existential angst" every now and then, Mr Wong said.

He noted concerns about the possible loss of human jobs to robots and how bricks-and-mortar shops may yield to the onslaught of digital platforms.

"But... it's not either or. The world will be one where you need to bring together humans and machines and find ways where better synergies can be obtained through that interaction," he said.

The new centre will use both behavioural science and advanced analytics to personalise wealth management advice for customers, according to a statement from NTU and WeBank.

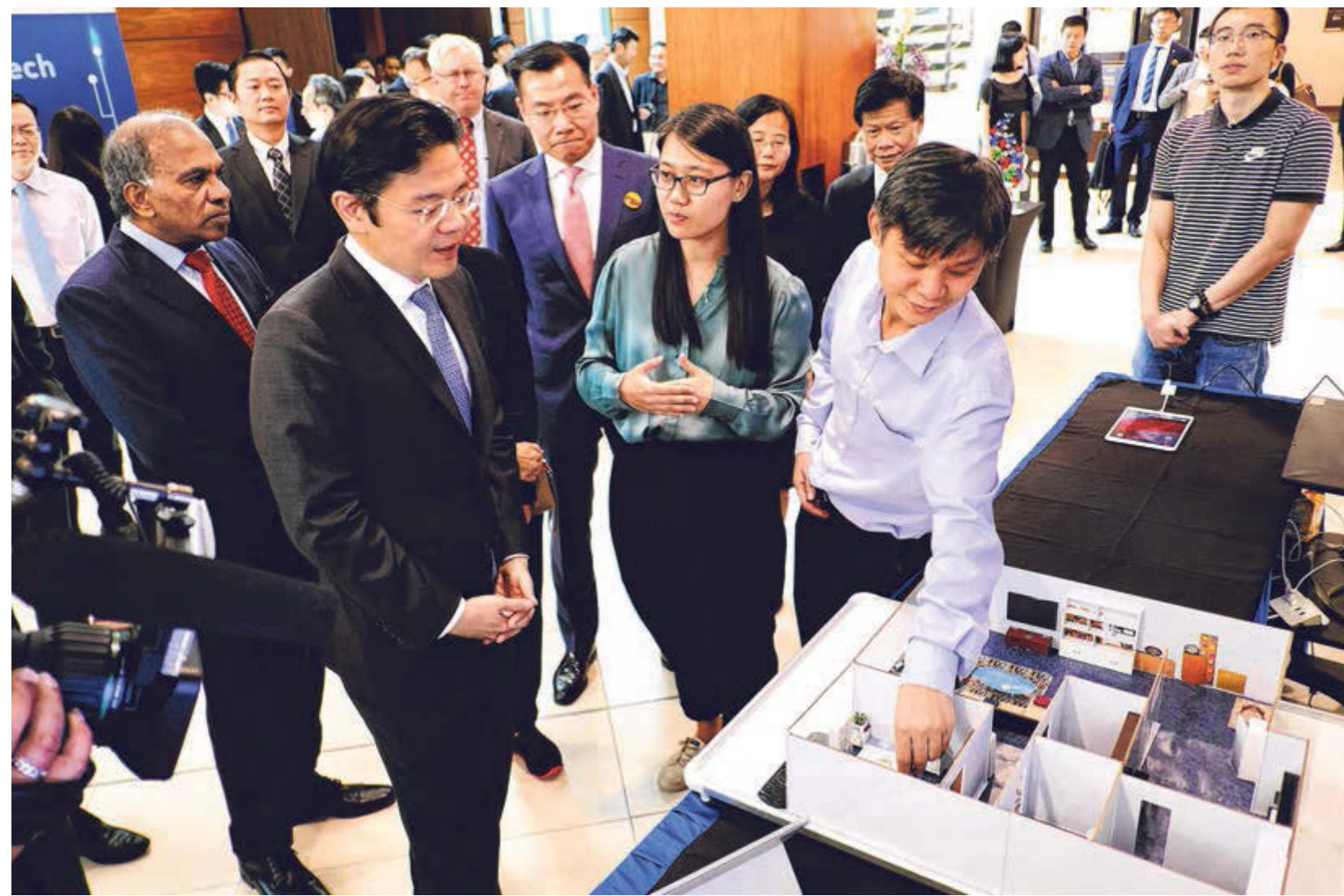
It will consider how investor behaviour departs from the assumption of traditional finance theories that "people are rational when making financial choices".

"Behavioural finance suggests investors are not always rational and are influenced by their own biases," the statement added.

WeBank chief executive David Ku said fintech can bring about "more possibilities for inclusive finance".

The new centre at NTU will "add to the diversity of the world's fintech ecosystem" and further drive innovation and optimise the financial services space, he added.

awcw@sph.com.sg



Mr Lawrence Wong (front row, left), Second Minister for Finance and National Development Minister, viewing an NTU research project that leverages on cutting-edge technology such as the Internet of Things, at the opening ceremony yesterday of the research centre. PHOTO: NTU

Moves to boost skills of logistics workers

Sue-Ann Tan

Efforts are under way to boost the logistics industry by improving the skills of workers in the sector, said Senior Minister of State for Trade and Industry Koh Poh Koon.

Dr Koh said yesterday: "The logistics sector forms the backbone of our economy and contributes to our quality of life... Emerging business and technology trends such as big data, 3D printing and digitalisation bring about new growth oppor-

tunities. Companies need to be agile to seize these new opportunities and, in turn, there will be improvements to existing jobs, as well as exciting new job opportunities."

He added that the scale of the sector's transformation will need to be accelerated. Businesses will also need to work with government agencies, trade associations and chambers, unions and institutes of higher learning.

Dr Koh made his remarks at a ceremony to mark agreements that home-grown firm ST Logistics has



Senior Minister of State for Trade and Industry Koh Poh Koon with ST Logistics chief executive (designate) Loganathan Ramasamy during a tour yesterday of Toll City, a next-generation logistics hub in Tuas. PHOTO: ST LOGISTICS

signed with NTUC LearningHub and the National University of Singapore (NUS).

Its memorandum of understanding with NTUC LearningHub allows both parties to start working together on skills-upgrading efforts, while the partnership with NUS will provide more training opportunities for working adults.

These initiatives will give logistics workers opportunities to gain new skills and certification through courses and bachelor's and master's programmes.

Mr Loganathan Ramasamy, chief executive (designate) of ST Logistics, said: "In the face of increased automation and digitisation in the supply chain and logistics industry, developing our workers to help them adapt and stay in sync with the changes is crucial for our continued success."

Dr Koh announced on the sidelines of the event at Toll City – a next-generation logistics hub in Tuas – that Workforce Singapore will add 200 places in the Professional Conversion Programmes for logistics officers and executives to encourage more professionals to enter the sector. Over 450 professionals and executives have moved into the industry through such programmes since June 2017.

The National Trades Union Congress will also lead the formation of company training committees through the Supply Chain Employees' Union. These will look at how to curate training that is required on the ground. The committees can also examine how to redesign jobs and encourage workers to go for retraining.

Dr Koh noted: "If more stakeholders and partners can come together and find working collaboration... then this is the kind of ground-up initiatives we want to see happening in our workplaces."

"Together with national-level efforts to reskill, upgrade and future-proof our workforce, we will reinforce Singapore's position as a leading logistics hub."

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Part-time work more prevalent

FROM C1

roducing more flexible work arrangements "so that employees can work during a period of time when they face the least amount of distractions and are the most productive", he said.

Part-time work has become more prevalent, with 10.9 per cent part-timers among employed residents last year, up from 8.4 per cent in 2009.

Fourteen per cent of the resident workforce were self-employed in their primary job last year, down from 14.6 per cent in 2017.

More "own account workers" – people who run their own business or trade without any paid employees – preferred this line of work as their primary job instead of being employees, said the report.

There were 167,300 such people last year, up from 147,900 in 2017.

Those who took on such work as their primary job though they preferred to work as employees numbered 14,800, compared with 43,000 in 2017.

Some freelancers may have returned to the familiar employment model after struggling for a while, especially if they did not invest in developing their skills, said NTUC assistant director-general Ang Hin Kee, who heads its Freelancers and Self-employed Unit.

At the same time, more people may be choosing freelancing as their primary job because they have multiple skills, which allow them to fill up their time with different types of jobs, he said.

"The environment and ecosystem now makes it more viable for people to do freelance work."

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Emerging markets now back on strategists' radar

Pundits expect less hawkish Fed and weaker greenback – conditions favourable to EMs

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Facebook's profit tops estimates, sparks share surge

Social media company's advertising business does well in face of series of privacy scandals

SAN FRANCISCO • Facebook Inc reported revenue that beat Wall Street estimates, showing the largest social media company's advertising business is weathering scrutiny over a series of privacy scandals.

Fourth-quarter sales were US\$16.91 billion (S\$22.8 billion), ahead of the US\$16.4 billion analysts expected. Earnings also

topped expectations, sparking a share surge of more than 7 per cent in extended trading on Wednesday.

Facebook had 1.52 billion daily active users in December, up 9 per cent from a year earlier.

Wall Street was looking for 1.51 billion, according to the average of four analyst forecasts. The company also reported an uptick in

daily users in mature markets like Europe, which investors were concerned had reached saturation.

"Users remained stable in North America and grew in Europe despite the negative news flow and increased scrutiny," said Mr Christopher Rossbach, chief investment officer of private investment office J. Stern & Co. "These results prove the resilience of the core Facebook platform."

The growth shows that Facebook's problems have not damaged the business much. Facebook ads,

and those of larger rival Google, are still more relevant and effective than most other options, precisely because the companies collect so much information on activity across the Internet and beyond.

New data-privacy rules in Europe may have limited this data harvesting slightly, but that has hit smaller competitors more than the two giants. Shares of Google parent Alphabet Inc rose 1.6 per cent in extended trading on Wednesday.

"Between the intellectual tech press and the Washington elite, there's a huge disconnect between the news and what the rest of the world is doing," said Mr Richard Greenfield, an analyst at BTIG LLC in New York City. "Advertisers don't listen to either of those groups - they listen to consumers. Most of Facebook's advertisers have no other place to go with a return on investment this good."

The company has also been making progress with emerging advertising initiatives. It has been running more promotions in messaging apps and in user posts called "stories" that last only 24 hours, because the main Facebook news feed is so popular it has less room to grow.

Instagram's Stories product has 500 million users now, chief execu-

tive officer Mark Zuckerberg said during a conference call with analysts. He also said the firm is focusing on making more of its messaging services encrypted by default, and expanding shopping on Instagram.

Facebook has sparked outrage over its handling of the vast amounts of data it collects about people. During the fourth quarter, the public learnt more about how it let Russia manipulate users in campaigns that continued through the 2018 US midterm elections.

The company also revealed a major privacy breach, after a bug allowed outsiders to access search histories and location check-ins of 14 million people.

There are some long-term effects to these short-term scares. When Facebook's Portal device for home-video chatting was launched in the fourth quarter, some consumers expressed reservations about the privacy of the product. Mr Zuckerberg told analysts the device sold "better than expected", without disclosing numbers. Before the results, Facebook shares closed up more than 4 per cent to US\$150.42 in New York trading. They are still down about 30 per cent from a record high in July.

BLOOMBERG



PHOTO: NYTIMES

STILL STRONG

These results prove the resilience of the core Facebook platform.



MR CHRISTOPHER ROSSBACH, chief investment officer of private investment office J. Stern & Co.

Alibaba's office in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, China. The e-commerce giant's better-than-expected results came after a stunning day for China when at least 20 companies warned investors that full-year earnings would lag behind expectations. PHOTO: REUTERS



Alibaba beats forecasts after bleak day for China earnings

HONG KONG • Alibaba Group Holding's quarterly earnings beat expectations after an expansion into new areas like cloud computing, a rare bright spot as many Chinese companies fell short of financial estimates.

The e-commerce giant's results came after a stunning day for China when at least 20 companies warned investors that full-year earnings would lag behind expectations.

They stemmed in part from a US\$3.3 billion (S\$4.4 billion) accounting gain after revaluing a sub-

sidiary, and executives warned of uncertainty during a deceleration of the world's second-largest economy.

China is showing signs of further deterioration, hurting the consumer demand that Alibaba's e-commerce businesses rely on.

Still, it has been spearheading a drive into lucrative new spheres such as rural markets, cloud services and entertainment.

On Wednesday, Alibaba's chief executive officer Daniel Zhang told analysts those new initiatives as

well as a global expansion should help offset the impact of an economic slowdown.

"China's economy is facing some uncertainty, but we do see opportunities," he told analysts during a conference call.

"One of the key regions we will stay focused on in the near term is South-east Asia."

Alibaba's shares rose 6.3 per cent in US trading to their highest level since September.

They have slumped 16 per cent in the past 12 months but have rallied

so far this month.

Net income at China's biggest e-commerce company rose 37 per cent to 33.1 billion yuan (S\$6.6 billion) in the December quarter, outpacing the 22.1 billion yuan projected.

It booked a gain of 21.99 billion yuan after re-valuing on-demand services arm Koubei.

The share of losses from the numerous companies it has invested in also narrowed sharply.

Adjusted earnings per share was 12.2 yuan, compared with the 11.2

yuan projected.

While revenue rose 41 per cent to 117.3 billion yuan, that was the slowest pace in more than two years and lagged behind the 119.4 billion yuan projected.

Alibaba is bracing itself for more nervous consumers this year: In November, it trimmed its sales outlook by as much as 6 per cent.

Cloud revenue rose 84 per cent in the December quarter, helping the company command half the domestic market for Internet-based computing services.

Growth also sprang from a decision to take control of delivery network Cainiao, meals-on-demand service Ele.me and video platform Youku.

Those expansions, however, have moved the company away from an asset-light model.

Alibaba could tap new revenue spigots this year such as personalised feed recommendations, which now generate more traffic than traditional search on its e-commerce platforms.

BLOOMBERG

Samsung's chip sales slows, dimming outlook

SEOUL • South Korea's Samsung Electronics warned of weaker earnings this year as it posted a 29 per cent drop in fourth-quarter operating profit yesterday, hit by a slowdown in demand for memory chips.

The global market leader in computer chips and smartphones said in a statement it expected "overall annual earnings to decline" this year, although sales of memory products and OLED panels would begin to revive in the second half.

Operating profit was 10.8 trillion won (S\$13.06 billion) in the fourth quarter, in line with its estimates earlier this month. Revenue fell 10 per cent to 59.3 trillion won.

The firm's chips power the handsets of most major smartphone makers, including Apple and China's



Samsung Electronics' operating profit was 10.8 trillion won (S\$13.06 billion) in the fourth quarter, in line with its estimates earlier this month. Revenue fell 10 per cent to 59.3 trillion won. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

market leader Huawei Technologies. Its memory and processor chips account for about 72 per cent of overall profit. But with China's economy growing at its slowest rate in nearly three decades, no end in sight to a United States-China trade war, smartphone sales weakening and US data centres overstocked with chips, it has been tough for global memory makers.

Samsung said memory demand was expected to remain weak in the first quarter due to "macroeconomic uncertainties" and inventory adjustments by major customers. Fourth-quarter operating profit for its chip division fell to 7.8 trillion won from 10.9 trillion won a year ago. Its mobile division logged 1.5 trillion won in quarterly operating profit, down from 2.4 trillion won a year ago.

Last year, Samsung shares lost 24 per cent amid a global tech sell-off prompted by fears over the impact on supply chains of the US-China trade conflict. "China's spending on IT products has dramatically fallen and we don't know when the US-China trade war is going to be over. All of that is affecting Samsung," said eBest Investment and Securities analyst Eo Kyu-jin. REUTERS

LG Electronics' Q4 profit dives 80%

SEOUL • South Korea's LG Electronics Inc posted its slowest quarterly profit growth in two years yesterday, citing higher marketing costs and tougher competition in the television business.

Fourth-quarter operating profit plummeted 80 per cent from a year earlier to 76 billion won (S\$92 million), in line with its earlier guidance, the company said.

Revenue fell 7 per cent to 15.8 trillion won, matching the company's estimate.

Widening losses in the company's struggling mobile business also dragged down profit, analysts said.

"LG Electronics' mobile business has not been generating profits at all. On top of that, high marketing expenses for its slow-selling handset models hurt the overall profit," said analyst Eo Kyu-jin at eBest Investment and Securities.

Competition in the high-end television set market, particularly from Chinese rivals, as well as global economic headwinds, are clouding the outlook for LG Electronics, analysts said.

LG's share price fell 1.5 per cent in a flat broader market yesterday after the results were released. REUTERS

Hang Seng



Shanghai Comp



Nikkei 225



Dow Jones



BullsAndBears

STI inches up in tandem with the region

US Fed's remark that it will be 'patient' on interest rate moves helps to calm nerves

Lynette Tan

It wasn't much to write home about but local shares managed to inch up yesterday in line with most regional markets, thanks to dovish comments from the United States Federal Reserve.

The improved mood nudged the Straits Times Index ahead 0.5 per cent or 15.79 points to 3,190.17 with gainers outnumbering losers 228 to 162 on trade of 1.38 billion shares worth \$1.33 billion.

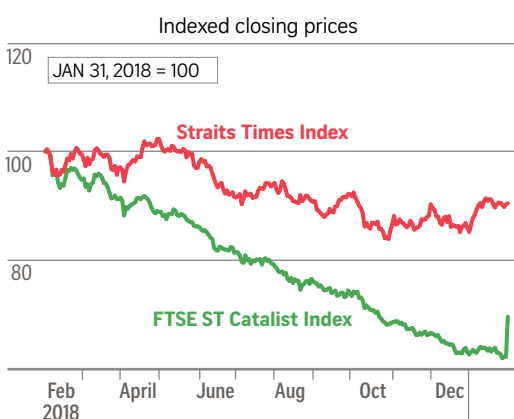
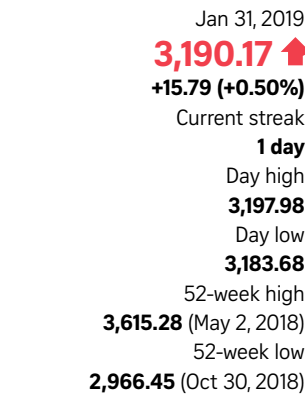
The US Fed said overnight that it will be "patient" on any future interest rate moves and signalled flexibility on the path for reducing its balance sheet. The statement, a significant departure from its previous signalling of further gradual rate hikes, helped calm nerves, said analysts.

Local shares were up on broad-based gains with most sectors finishing in the black, except for manufacturing, commerce and transport.

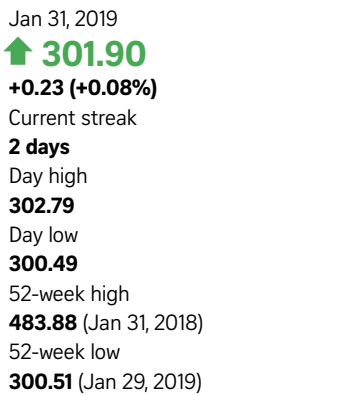
An exception was transport firm ComfortDelGro, which rose as much as 2.6 per cent during the day before closing 2.19 per cent higher at \$2.33. Brokerage firms CGS-CIMB, DBS Research and Maybank Kim Eng have "buy" recommendations on the stock.

News of a likely Fed pause in interest rate hikes lifted most Reits. Mapletree Logistics Trust closed up

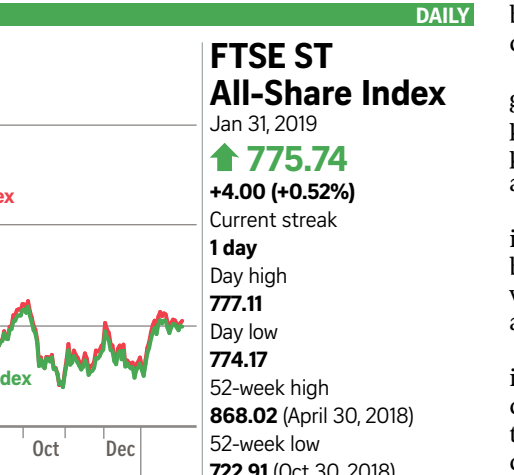
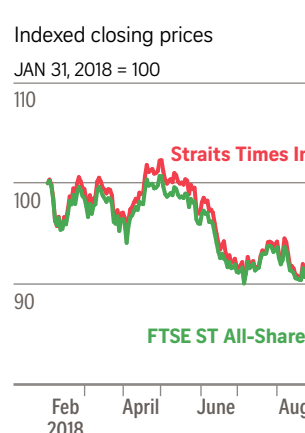
Straits Times Index



FTSE ST Catalyst Index



FTSE ST All-Share Index



0.74 per cent at \$1.37 and Frasers Logistics & Industrial Trust finished 0.94 per cent higher at \$1.08.

Likewise, Ascendas Reit gained 0.74 per cent to \$2.74. This also came on the back of news that the trust will develop and manage Grab's new \$181.2 million headquar-

ters. Ascendas Reit also posted higher distribution per unit for the third quarter, in line with analyst expectations. OCBC analyst Andy Wong is maintaining his "hold" rating on the counter.

OUE Commercial Reit gained 2.04 per cent to 50 cents on the

back of DBS Research upgrading its call to "buy".

The Reit will be an "attractive long-term play" for investors seeking exposure to the upturn in the Singapore office market, said DBS equity analysts.

The Fed's shift in its monetary policy path also saw the US dollar pull back against major currencies, providing support for crude oil prices – a positive for shipyard stocks.

Keppel Corp gained ground, rising 0.49 per cent to \$6.10 and Sembcorp Industries rose 0.78 per cent to \$2.59, but Sembcorp Marine closed unchanged at \$1.60.

With the Fed review out of the picture, US-China trade negotiations will prove the blockbuster to cap off the week.

Negotiations will include a meeting between US President Donald Trump and Chinese Vice-Premier Liu He.

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e-payment protection guidelines to be adopted on June 30

Banks and credit card issuers will get an extra five months to adopt the e-payments user protection guidelines that were due to kick in on Jan 31. The effective start date is now June 30.

The guidelines, which were issued in September, aim to set standards in terms of the duties of financial institutions and users for secure e-payment transactions, including simplifying processes if a user sends money to the wrong recipient.

They also apportion liability between financial institutions and users for unauthorised transactions.

"The banks have requested MAS for more time to implement the guidelines, owing to the scale and complexity of system changes needed to implement the transaction notification standards for all products and customers as set out in the guidelines," the Monetary Authority of Singapore said yesterday.

It added that the guidelines will instigate a more comprehensive notification alert process and framework for unauthorised transactions.

In the meantime, the MAS encourages consumers to enable notification alerts for transactions such as debit/credit card payments, funds transfer and cash withdrawals if their bank can provide them. "Consumers should monitor these notification alerts closely, and report unauthorised transactions immediately for their banks to follow up. Consumers should also continue practising good cyber hygiene when using e-payments," it said.

Straits Times Index stocks

52-WEEK HIGH	52-WEEK LOW	COMPANY	CURRENCY LAST TRADED/SALE	+OR-	'VOL '000	GROSS YIELD%	P/BV
278	245	Ascendas Reit	274	+2	18221	5.8	1.3
192	161	CapitaCom Trust	188 xd	unch	21564	4.6	1
385	298	Capitaland	333	+3	13143	3.6	0.7
240	195	CapitaMall Trust	240 xd	+4	11919	4.8	1.2
1359	780	CityDev	919	+16	2625	2	0.8
251	196	ComfortDelGro	233	+5	10356	4.5	2
3128	2265	DBS Grp	2392	-2	5572	6	1.4
994	767	DairyFarm USD	US903	-17	1034	2.3	-
136	85.5	Genting Sing	110	+1	38259	3.2	1.7
89	22.5	Golden Agri-Res	US25	unch	28602	3.2	0.6
415	23	HPH Trust USD	US25	-0.5	17719	10.5	0.4
744	588	HongkongLand USD	US717	+8	2346	2.8	0.3
6974	1099	JMH USD	US6682	+95	289	2.4	0.7
4080	3155	JSH USD	US3828	+118	316	0.8	0.4
4026	2766	Jardine C&C	3777	-31	294	3	1.8
882	567	Keppel Corp	610 cd	+3	4007	4.9	1
1404	1036	OCBC Bank	1151	+12	7506	3.2	1.2
564	455	SATS	484	+2	2747	3.7	3.4
826	672	SGX	764 xd	-1	4412	3.9	9.6
1184	914	SIA	965	-1	1731	4.1	0.8
292	231	SPH	251	+5	4355	5.2	1.1
373	319	ST Engineering	372	+6	6186	4	5.4
360	243	Sembcorp Ind	259	+2	4497	1.9	0.7
358	283	Singtel	302	+1	20022	6.8	1.7
92.5	57.5	ThaiBev	73 cd	unch	11983	0.9	3.6
3037	2380	UOB	2519	-11	3429	4	12
913	591	UOL	664	+8	1784	2.6	0.5
2965	1320	Venture Corp	1626	+4	1723	3.7	2.1
335	297	Wilmar Intl	333	+2	5722	3	1
162	84	YZJ Shipbldg SGD	140	-2	30812	3.2	1

FTSE ST Large & Mid-Cap Index stocks

52-WEEK HIGH	52-WEEK LOW	COMPANY	CURRENCY LAST TRADED/SALE	+OR-	'VOL '000	GROSS YIELD%	P/BV
278	245	Ascendas Reit	274	+2	18221	5.8	1.3
124	105	Ascott Reit	119 cd	unch	5858	6	1
75	59	Bumitama Agri	69	+2	935	1.1	16
179	143	CDL HTrust	167 cd	+4	5807	-	1.1
192	161	CapitaCom Trust	188 xd	unch	21564	4.6	1
385	298	Capitaland	333	+3	13143	3.6	0.7
240	195	CapitaMall Trust	240 xd	+4	11919	4.8	1.2
1359	780	CityDev	919	+16	2625	2	0.8
251	196	ComfortDelGro	233	+5	10356	4.5	2
3128	2265	DBS Grp	2392	-2	5572	6	1.4
994	767	DairyFarm USD	US903	-17	1034	2.3	-
78	59	Far East HTrust	66.5	+15	2617	-	0.8
192	150	Fraser's Cpt Tr	171	+1	282	4	2.2
231	211	Fraser's L&I Tr	229	+2	2521	5.2	110.1
116	101	Fraser's L&I Tr	108	+1	2498	6.3	12
136	85.5	Genting Sing	110	+1	38259	3.2	1.7
39	22.5	Golden Agri-Res	25.5	unch	28602	3.2	0.6
228	167	GuocoLand Ltd	183	-2	119	3.8	0.5
415	23	HPH Trust USD	US25	-0.5	17719	10.5	0.4
744	588	HongkongLand USD	US717	+8	2346	2.8	0.3
6974	1099	JMH USD	US6682	+95	289	2.4	0.7
4080	3155	JSH USD	US3828	+118	316	0.8	0.4
4026	2766	Jardine C&C	3777	-31	294	3	1.8
58	44.5	Keppel Infra Tr	51	unch	5943	7.3	1.9
882	567	Keppel Corp	610 cd	+3	4007	4.9	1
130	108	Keppel Reit	118	unch	7861	4.7	0.8
151	151	Man Oriental USD	US193	-1	78	1.5	3.6
273	170	Mapletree Ind Tr	176 xd	+1	11357	5.1	12
180	152	Mapletree Log Tr	200	-1	2772	5.9	14
212	184	Mapletree NAC Tr	137	+1	16013	5.6	12
140	118	Mapletree NAC Tr	128 cd	+4	12982	5.8	1
83.5	73	NetLink NBN Tr	78.5	unch	6718	-	1
1404	1036	OCBC Bank	1151	+12	7506	3.2	1.2
215	136	OUE	153	unch	300	2	0.3
92.5	64.5	OUE HTrust	73.5 cd	+1	2287	-	1
250	157	Olam Intl	185	-1	489	4.1	1
59	28	Oxley	30	unch	2540	5	0.9
303	256	ParkwayLife Reit	287 cd	+4	1421	4.5	15
121	98	Raffles Medical	111	unch	1106	2	2.6
564	455	SATS	484	+2	2747	3.7	3.4
826	672	SGX	764 xd	-1	4412	3.9	9.6
1184	914	SIA	965	-1	1731	4.1	0.8
337	220	SIA Engineering	248	-2	335	5.2	1.9
292	231	SPH	251	+5	4355	5.2	1.1
105	98	SPHREIT	103	unch	200	5.4	1.1
373	319	ST Engineering	372	+6	6186	4	5.4
360	243	Sembcorp Ind	259	+2	4497	1.9	0.7
281	149	Sembcorp Marine	160	unch	4958	1.3	1.4
58	39	Silverlake Axis	48.5	+15	8825	6.2	7
147	88.5	SingPost	98.5	+1	1733	3.6	1.3
358	283	Singtel	302	+1	20022	6.8	1.7
291	158	StarHub	178	-1	1567	9	5.4
77.5	63.5	StarhillGbl Reit	71.5 cd	-0.5	2641	6.4	0.8
208	163	Suntree Reit	19347	+4	14847	5.2	0.9
92.5	57.5	ThaiBev	73 cd	unch	11983	0.9	3.6
10.2	3.7	Thomson Medical	7.8	-0.1	14965	-	2.8
3037	2380	UOB	2519	-11	3429	4	12
913	591	UOL	664	+8	1784	2.6	0.6
2965	1320	Venture Corp	1626	+4	1723	3.7	2.1
335	297	Wilmar Intl	333	+2	5722	3	1
243	183	Wing Tai	205	+2	399	3.9	0.5
162	84	YZJ Shipbldg SGD	140	-2	30812	3.2	1
188	116	Yanlord Land	127	unch	3526	5.4	0.5

FTSE ST Small-Cap Index stocks

52-WEEK HIGH	52-WEEK LOW	COMPANY	LAST SALE	+OR-	'VOL '000	GROSS YIELD%	P/BV
145	129	AIMSAMP Cap Reit	138	unch	440	7.5	1
70	48	Accordia Golf Tr	55	+15	790	7	0.6
90.5	74	Ascendas-hTrust	85	+0.5	1278	-	0.9
119	99	Ascendas-iTrust	108	+1	1029	5.6	1.3
58	12.2	Asian Pay TV Tr	131	+0.1	5370	49.6	0.2
64	48	Banyan Tree	59	+0.5	667	17	0.8
281	115	Best World	267	-7	2437	15	9.6
85.5	76	Boustead	79	unch	47	3.8	12
126	79.5	BreadTalk	88	+1	73	8	2.3
653	521	Bukit Sembawang	561	-5	22	3.2	1.1
88	65.5	Cache Log Trust	73 cd	+1	3145	8.1	1.1
52.5	39.5	Centurion	40.5	unch	79	6.2	0.7
166	104	China Aviation	116	+2	1746	3.9	1
47.5	29.5	China Everbright	36.5	-0.5	345	1.3	0.7
165	90.5	China Sunshine	130	+2	856	23	15
104	64	Chip Eng Seng	70.5	+15	3541	5.7	0.6
53.5	31.5	Cosco	36.5	unch	3537	-	1.6
700	302	Delong	585	-3	0	-	0.6
27.5	17.5	Duty Free Intl	20.5 cd	+0.5	400	9	1.3
79	67.5	EC World Reit	72.5	+0.5	870	8.3	0.8
59.5	47	ESR-REIT	52.5	+0.5	3376	7.4	1.1
142	92	First Reit	109	+3	1264	7.9	1.1
149	134	Frasers Com Tr	149	+1	2431	6.4	1
82	66.5	Frasers HTrust	73.5	+1	692	-	1
26.5	16.4	Geo Energy Res	19.9	-0.1	926	5	12
91	70.5	HRnetGroup	78	unch	688	2.9	2.4
68	52	Health Mgt Intl	54.5	unch	23	0.6	5.2
279	73	Hi-P Intl	92.5	-15	5098	27	1.4
283	252	Hong Leong Fin	262	unch	60	5	0.6
81.5	71	IREIT Global	74.5	+0.5	122	8	1
40.5	18.3	Indofood Agri	22	unch	817	-	0.3
83.5	43	Japfa	83	+15	4131	0.6	1.6
80	49	KSH	52	unch	24	4.2	0.9
86.9	53	Kep-KBS Reit USD	66.5 xd	-3	558	9.4	0.6
149	128	Keppel DC Reit	144	+1	5295	5.1	1.3
189	132	Keppel T&T	188	+1	172	-	1.2
119	7	KrisEnergy	8.6	+0.1	21804	-	1
78.5	44.5	Lian Beng	49	unch	834	4.6	0.4
42.5	18	Lippo Malls Tr	24	+0.5	11274	14.3	0.9
53	30	MM2 Asia	32.5	+0.5	460	-	1.8
98.5	69.5	ManulifeReit USD	85	unch	3097	6.5	0.8
120	95	Metro	99	unch	94	5.1	0.6
26	5	Noble	8.1	susp	-	-	-
66.9	45	OUE Com Reit	50 cd	+1	5395	7	0.7
66.5	54	PEC	57.5	-0.5	34	3.5	0.6
46	17	POSH	18.7	+0.6	155	-	0.6
64.5	44.5	Q&M Dental	50	+1	150	3.2	3.6
114	55.5	QAF Ltd	70	+2	66	7.1	0.8
124	96	Riverstone	112	-1	16	2.1	3.7
55	22	SIIC Environment	32	-1.5	614	-	0.5
45	38	Sabana Reit	41.5 xd	-0.5	1035	7.7	0.7
119	90	Sheng Siong	111	+1	888	3	6.1
25.5	3.3	Sino Grandness	6.5	+0.6	14139	-	0.1
69	56	SoilbuildBizReit	60.5	+1	1645	8.7	1
129	80.5	Tianjin ZX USD	85.5	+2	292	-	0.7
48.5	32.5	Tuan Sing	39.5	-0.5	1769	15	0.5
136	54	UMS	64	+0.5	4103	7.8	1.5
112	58.5	Valuetronics	70.5	+0.5	4593	6.5	161.4
16.1	8.3	Ying Li Intl	12	-0.1	3692	-	0.3
51	24	Yoma Strategic	34	+1	2269	0.7	0.9
35	16.1	Yongnam	17.7	+0.1	252	-	0.3

RedMart customers have to use the Lazada app for orders from March 15. The home-grown online supermarket was acquired in 2016 by Lazada for an undisclosed sum. ST FILE PHOTO



Online grocer RedMart to migrate to Lazada app in March

Lazada to expand its supermarket business in South-east Asia

Alibaba-backed Lazada will be integrating home-grown e-grocer RedMart onto its platform in March, as part of the group's plans to accelerate the growth of its supermarket business in South-east Asia.

This means that shoppers will be able to buy groceries and fresh produce along with Lazada's other products on a single platform.

RedMart, which was acquired by Lazada in 2016 for an undisclosed sum, will move to Lazada at midnight on March 15.

Users can expect the same shopping experience as the new Red-

Mart will feature similar design and functions as the current app and website, the company said.

Existing RedMart customers can continue shopping on the app and website until 11.59pm on March 14, before the migration kicks in. Thereafter they will have to download the Lazada app to continue using the service. Orders on the new RedMart on Lazada will continue to be fulfilled by RedMart in customers' chosen two-hour delivery slot from 7am to 10pm daily, while orders with other Lazada sellers will be fulfilled separately.

Lazada's latest move is aimed at catering to the rising demand of supermarket shopping as consumers increasingly buy their groceries online, the company said.

It added that the grocery market in South-east Asia is expected to be worth some US\$309 billion (S\$416 billion) by 2021, with shoppers filling their baskets online more than twice a month.

Meanwhile, Lazada is looking to launch its grocery and supermarket business in at least one other city in South-east Asia from the second half of the year.

Spearheading the group's push into the supermarket business in South-east Asia is RedMart co-founder Roger Egan, who has been appointed as Lazada Group head of supermarket. He will oversee the expansion, launch and operations for Lazada's supermarket business and delivery network across the region, the company said.

Lazada's latest move is aimed at catering to the rising demand of supermarket shopping as consumers increasingly buy their groceries online, the company said.

CompanyBriefs

Shell

Royal Dutch Shell yesterday reported a 36 per cent rise in last year's profits to US\$21.4 billion (S\$28.8 billion), the highest since 2014, beating forecasts as cost savings kicked in, said Reuters.

For the fourth quarter of last year, the Anglo-Dutch firm's net income attributable to shareholders, based on a current cost of supplies and excluding identified items, rose 32 per cent on the year to US\$5.688 billion, as deep cost cuts introduced after the 2014 market downturn filtered through.

That compared with a company-provided forecast of US\$5.28 billion for the quarter and US\$20.98 billion for the full year.

Hatten Land

Property developer Hatten Land intends to transfer from the Catalist to the main board of the Singapore Exchange (SGX), the company said in an SGX filing on Wednesday.

The proposed transfer is subject to the approval of the firm's shareholders at an extraordinary general meeting, as well as of SGX. Hatten Land said an application to the SGX will be made in due course.

Unilever

Unilever reported lower-than-expected fourth-quarter sales yesterday, hurt by inflation in Argentina and flat volume growth in developed markets, in its first set of results since new chief executive Alan Jope took charge.

The maker of Dove soap and Ben & Jerry's ice cream said fourth-quarter underlying sales rose 2.9 per cent, reported Reuters. Analysts, on average, were expecting 3.5 per cent, a consensus forecast supplied by the firm showed.

The Anglo-Dutch group had said full-year sales growth would be at the bottom end of its 3 per cent to 5 per cent forecast range.

Unilever blamed Argentina, which makes up 2.5 per cent of its overall business, for hyperinflation that led prices to spike more than 50 per cent and therefore volume to fall more than 20 per cent in the quarter.

But more broadly, sales volume in the Americas was flat, as pricing growth was offset by volume declines. The same happened in Europe, though the company eked out 0.8 per cent sales growth in the region. Overall, underlying sales in developed markets grew 0.4 per cent in the quarter.

For the full year, Unilever reported turnover of US\$57.05 billion (S\$77 billion), excluding its divested spreads business, with underlying sales up 3.1 per cent, in line with expectations.

China AI firm Yitu opens R&D centre in S'pore

A Chinese firm working in the area of artificial intelligence officially opened a research and development centre here yesterday, its first outside China.

Yitu Technology, which is known for its facial recognition software, said the facility at Mapletree Business City will support its growth in Singapore and the region.

The firm opened an office in Singapore last year.

Its R&D centre will initially focus on developing AI solutions for smart buildings, enhancing natural language and speech processing technologies for commercial applications, and optimising computer vision methods for medical diagnostics.

Mr Zhang Zhenjie, Yitu Singapore's R&D director, said: "The centre will provide a platform for local AI talent from both academia and

industry to translate cutting-edge research into innovative AI technologies and solutions that create a better quality of life for citizens, from smarter healthcare to improved infrastructure."

The facility houses 30 staff, comprising AI algorithm researchers, system researchers, hardware experts and engineers. Yitu plans to lift headcount to around 100 over the next three years.

The facility houses 30 staff, comprising AI algorithm researchers, system researchers, hardware experts and engineers. Yitu plans to lift headcount to around 100 over the next three years.

It noted that attracting top talent will be a priority for the centre, with plans to roll out an AI hackathon open to local tertiary students to bring in the next generation of skilled employees.

Opening the centre will form a key part of Yitu's plans to tap the potential of Singapore and South-east Asia as key drivers of global growth, said the company.

Hence, a "crucial component" will include customising AI applications to address specific local needs.

Yitu said it intends to work closely with industry partners, local universities and research institutes to carry out pioneering R&D.

It has started to explore such collaboration opportunities.

Initiatives include conducting trials with industry partners such as Keppel Land and working with Nanyang Polytechnic to boost industry-relevant AI education and research.

Interbank currency rates

Currencies	Against S\$		Against US\$	
	Bid	Offer	Bid	Offer
S\$/US\$ to one unit of foreign currency:				
Australian dollar	0.9764	0.9773	0.7249	0.7254
Canadian dollar	1.0246	1.0250	0.7609	0.7606
Euro	1.5472	1.5479	1.1486	1.1490
NZ dollar	0.9292	0.9298	0.6898	0.6902
Sterling pound	1.7659	1.7663	1.3110	1.3111
US dollar	1.3470	1.3472	-	-
S\$/US\$ to 100 units of foreign currency:				
Chinese renminbi	20.0402	20.0730	14.8776	14.8998
Danish kroner	20.7263	20.7325	15.3670	15.3894
Hong Kong dollar	17.17	17.18	12.7496	12.7499
Indian Rupee	189	189	14.035	14.041
Indonesian rupiah	0.0095	0.0095	0.0071	0.0071
Japanese yen	12361	12366	0.9177	0.9179
Korean won	0.1210	0.1210	0.0898	0.0898
Malaysian ringgit	3.291	3.295	24.4320	24.4618
New Taiwan dollar	4.3792	4.3868	3.2511	3.2563
Norwegian krone	15.9986	16.0105	11.8772	11.8842
Philippine peso	25.800	25.823	19.153	19.168
Saudi riyal	35.9143	35.9225	26.6624	26.6645
Swedish krona	14.9051	14.9119	11.0654	11.0688
Swiss franc	135.5813	135.6560	100.6543	100.6948
Thai Baht	4.3063	4.3083	3.1969	3.1980

Government securities

GOVERNMENT BONDS					
Period	Issue code	Coupon rate (%)	Maturity	Close Bid	Day's High
2-Year	NY05100N	3.250%	01-Sep-20	101.96	101.98
5-Year	NS19100A	2.000%	01-Feb-24	99.99	100.00
10-Year	NX18100A	2.625%	01-May-28	103.99	104.15
15-Year	NZ13100V	3.375%	01-Sep-33	111.88	112.00
20-Year	NZ16100X	2.250%	01-Aug-36	96.89	97.15
30-Year	NA16100H	2.750%	01-Mar-46	103.21	103.45

Note: Based on latest issue

Source: Monetary Authority of Singapore

MSCI INDICES

	Jan 30	Index	%dy	%yr
World Preliminary	1527.4	0.6	6.0	
EMEA Preliminary	1058.9	0.4	5.1	
Europe Preliminary	1481.2	0.6	5.5	
Australia	1184.2	0.4	3.8	
Austria Preliminary	543.5	1.5	9.1	
Belgium Preliminary	992.6	0.8	8.5	
Canada Preliminary	1980.1	0.0	8.2	
Denmark Preliminary	7693.5	0.5	3.9	
Finland Preliminary	715.3	-0.4	9.5	
France Preliminary	1802.1	0.9	5.2	
Germany Preliminary	898.9	-0.3	6.5	
Greece Preliminary	46.2	-0.7	6.5	
India	1240.8	-0.1	-1.7	
Indonesia	737.3	0.3	4.2	
Ireland Preliminary	191.7	0.0	7.0	
Israel Preliminary	253.8	0.2	10.1	
Italy Preliminary	669.9	0.4	7.7	
Japan	930.5	-0.3	4.2	
Korea	665.4	1.3	10.2	
Malaysia	583.8	-0.4	0.4	
Netherlands Preliminary	1562.0	0.6	7.1	
New Zealand	134.1	-1.1	1.1	
Norway Preliminary	2887.1	-0.2	3.7	
Pakistan	414.2	0.2	16.1	
Philippines	1357.8	-1.0	7.6	
Portugal Preliminary	83.8	-0.1	3.8	
Singapore	1654.9	-0.5	3.8	
Singapore Free	355.8	-0.5	3.8	

Source: MSCI

SPH DIRECT SUBSCRIBERS MOVIE PREVIEW INVITE

COLD PURSUIT

Welcome to Kehoe, it's -10 degrees and counting at this glitzy ski resort in the Rocky Mountains. The local police aren't used to much action until the son of unassuming town snowplough driver, Nels Coxman (Academy Award nominee Liam Neeson), is murdered at the order of Viking (Tom Bateman), a flamboyant drug lord. Fueled by rage and armed with heavy machinery, Nels sets out to dismantle the cartel one man at a time, but his understanding of murder comes mainly from what he read in a crime novel. As the bodies pile up, his actions ignite a turf war between Viking and his long-standing rival White Bull (Tom Jackson), a soulful Native-American mafia boss, that will quickly escalate and turn the small town's bright white slopes blood-red.

200 lucky direct subscribers stand to win a pair of movie preview invites held on Mon 18 Feb 2019 at Shaw Theatres Lido.

To take part in the draw:
1) Download the SPH Rewards app
2) Look for the contest in the "rewards" section to participate.
Terms and conditions apply.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life." *John 3:16*



Ho Kek Lwee

Age: 90

Was called home to be with the Lord on 30 January 2019.
Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.

Wives: Ng Swee Heng (deceased)
Chiang Guek Whay

Sisters:
Ho Cheow Yong (deceased)
Ho Cheow Luan (deceased)
Ho Cheow Eng

Sons:
Ho Saw Keng
Ho Wee Seng
Ho Wee Lun Max

Daughters:
Ho Sor Kim
Ho Soh Tuan Iris
Ho Soh Choo Judy
Ho Soh Peng Irene
Ho Wee Hwee Serene

Godson:
Freddy Sim Boon Heng

Brothers-in-law:
So Peng Lin (deceased)
Khoo Soo Chew (deceased)
Goh Chin Kho (deceased)

Daughters-in-law:
Koh Kah Choo
Chan Suet Hing
Ng Hui Hui

Sons-in-law:
Tang Lung Teck
Tan Teow Tat
Sebastian Ng Hock Guan BBM

Goddughter-in-law:
Angeline Ong Ah Piow

21 Grandchildren, 10 great-grandchildren, all relatives and friends.

Wake is held at Block 77 Marine Drive, Singapore 440077.
Nightly services will be held at 8.00pm.

Cortege leaves on Sunday 3 February 2019 at 4.15pm for
Mandai Crematorium Hall 2 for cremation at 5.15pm.

"The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not be in want...
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." *Psalms 23*



Wong Hoong Hin

Age: 96

Was called home to be with the Lord on 31 January 2019.
Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.

Wife: Ng May Siew (deceased)

Daughters:
Wong Pui Yee
Wong Heng Yee

Granddaughters:
Yow Enning
Carmen Ow Kar Mun

Grandson:
Yow Wenxin

Son-in-law:
Victor Ow Chun Ming

Grandson-in-law:

Bryan Tan Junyou

Caregivers:
Merly, Evelyn and Melowin

And all relatives and friends.

Wake is held at Singapore Casket Level 2, Regency Hall,
131 Lavender Street, Singapore 338737
from Friday 1 February 2019, 3.00pm onwards.

Night service on Saturday 2 February 2019 at 8.00pm.

Cortege leaves on Sunday 3 February 2019 at 2.00pm
for Mandai Crematorium Hall 3 for cremation at 3.00pm.

"Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil,
for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me." *Psalms 23:4*



周守花 Chew Siew Ho

Age: 75

Was called home to be with the Lord on 30 January 2019.
Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.

Husband: Woo Shuit Ker (deceased)

Sons:
Woo Pau Chiang
Woo Pau Siong

Daughter:
Woo Geok Hoon

Grandsons:
Woo Jia Le
Woo Jia Yu
Kelvin Ong Jia Wei
Edwin Ong Jia Wen

Daughters-in-law:
Yeo Ah Ai
Pok Seok Mui

Son-in-law:
Ong Hock Seng

Granddaughters:
Woo Jia Ning
Joyce Ong Jia Yi

Grandson-in-law:
Jerry Loo Yanye

And all relatives and friends.

Wake is held at Block 12 North Bridge Road, Singapore 190012.

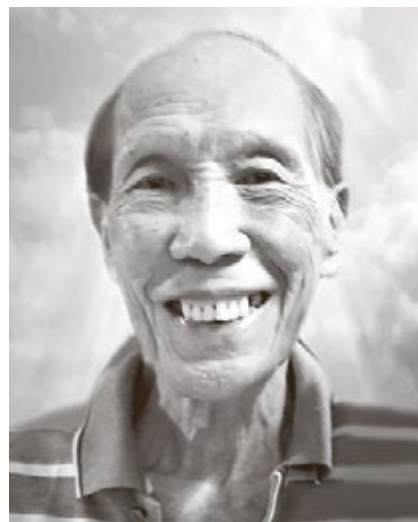
Nightly services will be held at 8.00pm.

Cortege leaves on Sunday 3 February 2019 at 2.00pm
for Mandai Crematorium Hall 2 for cremation at 3.00pm.

With Deepest Sympathy & Heartfelt Condolences to

Mr Martin Gui, Group Managing Director

on the demise of his Father-in-law



Chia Fook Fatt George

on 30 January 2019

From:

**The Management & Staff of
Facility Link Group of Companies**

With Deepest Sympathy & Heartfelt Condolences to

Our Chairman / CEO Mr Victor Ow

Our Directors Mdm Wong Pui Yee

and Ms Carmen Ow

On the demise of their

Beloved Father-in-law / Father / Grandfather



Mr Wong Hoong Hin

Departed on 31 January 2019

From Management & Staff of:



10th Anniversary
In Loving Memory of



Poh Hou Ming Clifford

Departed on 1 February 2009

Not just today, but every day,
In silence we remember.

Dearly missed and always remembered
by Dad: Poh Hee Hian, Mum: Christine
Brother: Jeremy, Sister-in-law,
uncles, aunts, relatives and friends.



In memory of
a loved one



In memory of
a loved one

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days
of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever." *Psalms 23:6*



Doris Wong Yoke Moi

Age: 78

Was called home to be with the Lord on 29 January 2019.
Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.

Daughter:
Ho Tsai Kim Yvette

Son:
Ho Tjin Charn Bernard

Son-in-law:
Yap Nam Koon Sunny

**Grandchildren, granddaughter-in-law, great-grandson,
siblings, in-laws, nephews, nieces,
all relatives and friends.**

Wake is held at Chapel of Repose, Church of St Teresa,
SPES Room, 510 Kampong Bahru Road, Singapore 099446.
Nightly services will be held at 8.00pm.

Cortege leaves on Sunday 3 February 2019 at 3.30pm
for Mandai Crematorium Hall 3 for cremation at 4.30pm.



MDM THANAMANY W/O WARHEES NEE THANAMANY D/O THIRUNAVUKARASOO

Age: 82

was called home to be with the Lord on 31 Jan 2019,
leaving behind loved ones.

Husband: Aloysius Warhees

Son:
Alfred Aloysius

Daughter-in-law:
Tammy Tan

Body is resting at Church of the Holy Spirit, 248 Upper Thomson Rd
S(574371). Funeral service will be held on 3 Feb 2019, 1.30pm.
Thereafter, cortege leaves for Mandai Crematorium Hall 4
for cremation at 3.30pm.

Contact person: Tammy Tan 96830732

Share the message of farewell with loved ones & friends



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You can search for notices published in the last 30 days
and share it via email, SMS or social media.



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SPORT

10

S'PORE GOLFER AMANDA TAN'S HSBC WOMEN'S WORLD C'SHIP TARGET C8



Liverpool's Guinean midfielder Naby Keita goes down in the area after a challenge from Leicester City's Ricardo Pereira (left) but referee Martin Atkinson refuses to give a penalty which frustrates Jurgen Klopp. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

KLOPP SEES RED OVER REF'S CALLS

He rues Maguire's let-off, penalty denial as Foxes foil Reds' bid to capitalise on City slip

LONDON • Jurgen Klopp claimed Liverpool were refused a clear penalty and Harry Maguire should not have been on the pitch to deny the Premier League leaders a seven-point advantage in the title race as Leicester secured a surprise 1-1 draw at Anfield on Wednesday.

The Reds extended their lead over Manchester City to five points (61 in total), but missed the opportunity

to capitalise fully on the English champions' loss at Newcastle on Tuesday as they failed to beat a team outside the top six for the first time this term.

Sadio Mane gave the hosts the lead in the third minute – their fastest league goal in nearly three years – after a sensational 30-pass move, only for Maguire to cancel out his strike in first-half stoppage time.

However, Klopp felt the Foxes were lucky not to have been reduced to 10 men prior to Maguire's equaliser, claiming the defender should have seen red for denying Mane a clear goal-scoring opportunity. He was instead yellow-carded.

Referee Martin Atkinson's refusal to penalise Ricardo Pereira for clipping Naby Keita inside the box after the break added to Klopp's frustration although, given the chances Leicester squandered, he accepted the draw.

The Liverpool manager said: "Ev-

1st

For the first time this season, Liverpool have failed to beat a team outside the top six.

erybody agrees there could have been a penalty. I don't know why it wasn't a penalty. Have I spoken to the referee about it? No. I don't think it will change anything.

"I don't think you need a Video Assistant Referee (VAR) for that (Keita decision) because of the position of the ref on the pitch.

"But he doesn't want to give it and I don't think VAR would have told him to look at it again."

He then turned his complaints to Maguire.

"I would say it is a 100 per cent... a situation where there is a goal-scoring chance that tells the ref he has to give a red card," he said.

"Because not only is Sadio through, but I am also pretty sure Mo (Salah) was on the other side, which gives you two against one, against (Kasper) Schmeichel."

To compound the German's unhappiness, the snowfall on Merseyside resulted in a "difficult pitch" which stymied their usual free-flowing attack.

He added: "We needed to speed it up in the final third, (but) our counter-attacks in the opening moments were defended more by the pitch than our opponents.

"Today, when it started snowing during the warm-up, it was all okay but, when we came out, snow was on the pitch.

"The ball didn't roll really and, if you have the ball pretty much for 70-80 per cent of the time, then it makes life really uncomfortable."

Liverpool looked nervous and susceptible at the back at times and captain Jordan Henderson admitted to BT Sport that "it wasn't our best performance".

"We are disappointed with the result because we wanted the win, but Leicester are a good side," he said. "We'll take the point and move on to the next game."

Leicester manager Claude Puel had insisted before kick-off that his side would, as they had done before, raise their game against a leading club. And the Frenchman was vindicated by a battling display that left his team 11th in the table.

"Of course I am proud of my players," he said. "It was another difficult start to the game. We conceded after two minutes, but we didn't lose our structure. At the end, we had more chances and it could have been better." AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, THE GUARDIAN, REUTERS

Sarri puzzled by Chelsea collapse, says sorry to fans



Bournemouth's Charlie Daniels celebrates scoring their fourth goal against Chelsea on Wednesday. The 4-0 win resulted in the Blues dropping out of the Premier League's top four on goal difference. PHOTO: REUTERS

LONDON • Maurizio Sarri has admitted that he may not be equipped to motivate his players after Chelsea were trounced 4-0 at Bournemouth, their heaviest Premier League defeat since 1996.

The Italian, who endured chants of "You don't know what you're doing" from the livid away fans, kept his team in the dressing room for around an hour after the final whistle on Wednesday night in an effort to understand why a game that had been goalless at half-time had unravelled so spectacularly.

The defeat led to Chelsea dropping out of the top four on goal difference and places his position under scrutiny six months into a three-year contract.

Speaking after the post-match inquest, during which he asked the rest of his coaching staff to leave, Sarri said: "In that moment I wanted to talk to them alone, without anybody. I needed to understand, it was so different in the first and second half.

"In the first half, we could never

see that the second half would be a disaster. We stopped playing. We didn't play like a team. It's difficult to understand why.

"The players are good enough. Maybe we are not at the top of the Premier League, but we are competitive. We can lose, of course, in every match, but not in this way."

Asked if he was good enough to steer the Blues to success, he added: "Maybe it's my fault, maybe I'm not able to motivate them. But the team are very strong, they are also able to win without the coach."

He had been critical of his players after the recent 2-0 defeat by Arsenal in the hope of coaxing a positive reaction but, despite encouraging Cup wins against Tottenham and Sheffield Wednesday, this was a second successive loss in the league and the fifth in their past 12 games.

However, the 60-year-old claimed he did not feel his job was "under pressure" before apologising to the travelling supporters after Joshua King scored a brace either side of David Brooks' strike be-

fore Charlie Daniels completed the rout in stoppage time.

He said: "I didn't see the signal of my work. So I am frustrated. I have to try again tomorrow because I need to solve this problem. We have only to say sorry to our fans."

But while Sarri publicly questioned his team's resolve, Mauricio Pochettino, on the other hand, revelled in the "massive commitment" shown by Son Heung-min.

The forward, who returned to Spurs after South Korea exited the Asian Cup, was a bundle of energy at Wembley, cancelling out Craig Cathcart's opener before Fernando Llorente's winner in the 2-1 win.

Such was Son's dedication to their cause that the Spurs manager had no choice but to keep the player on the field for 90 minutes even though "it was not the plan".

He said: "I'm so happy with his performance. He deserves a lot of praise. I have to be honest, I'm happy that he's back because he's helping us to try to win."

REUTERS, THE GUARDIAN

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE										
	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts			
1 Liverpool	24	19	4	1	55	14	61			
2 Man City	24	18	2	4	63	19	56			
3 Tottenham	24	18	0	6	50	24	54			
4 Arsenal	24	14	5	5	50	33	47			
5 Chelsea	24	14	5	5	40	23	47			
6 Man Utd	24	13	6	5	48	35	45			
7 Wolves	24	10	5	9	30	31	35			
8 Everton	24	9	6	9	35	33	33			
9 Watford	24	9	6	9	33	34	33			
10 Bournemouth	24	10	3	11	37	42	33			
11 Leicester	24	9	5	10	30	30	32			
12 West Ham	24	9	4	11	30	37	31			
13 Brighton	24	7	5	12	27	36	26			
14 Newcastle	24	6	6	12	21	32	24			
15 Crystal Palace	24	6	5	13	24	33	23			
16 Southampton	24	5	8	11	26	41	23			
17 Burnley	24	6	5	13	25	45	23			
18 Cardiff	24	5	4	15	20	46	19			
19 Fulham	24	4	5	15	25	53	17			
20 Huddersfield	24	2	5	17	13	41	11			



Qatar's Almoez Ali (left) celebrating with Bassam Al-Rawi after scoring his second goal in the 2-0 group-stage win over Saudi Arabia at the Zayed Sports City Stadium in Abu Dhabi on Jan 18. The United Arab Emirates has formally questioned the eligibility of Sudan-born Ali and Iraqi-born Al-Rawi. PHOTO: REUTERS

Asian Cup 2019

ELIGIBILITY ROW NO CONCERN FOR QATAR

Gulf state focused on Cup final against Japan despite cloud hanging over foreign-born duo

ABU DHABI • Qatar coach Felix Sanchez said his team would not be distracted from the “most important match in the country’s football history” by a protest over the eligibility of two of their best players at the Asian Cup.

The National newspaper reported yesterday on the eve of the Qatar-Japan final that the host, the United Arab Emirates, had formally questioned the eligibility of Sudan-born striker Almoez Ali and Iraqi-born defender Bassam Al-Rawi.

World football governing body Fifa mandates that a player switching national teams must either qualify through their parents or grandparents or must reside in a country for five years after their 18th birthday.

It is alleged that the 22-year-old Ali and 21-year-old Al-Rawi have not met the residency requirements to be eligible. Qatar claimed that they have relatives born in the country which allows them to play, which the UAE disputes.

Ali scored his record-equalling eighth goal of the tournament when Qatar beat the UAE 4-0 in the semi-finals on Tuesday. Al-Rawi

was suspended for that match but is expected to return for the final.

The Asian Football Confederation confirmed that it has received a protest from the UAE Football Association regarding two players and that it would be “reviewed in line with the AFC regulations”.

Spaniard Sanchez, however, said that his players were focused on preparing for today’s match at Zayed Sports City Stadium.

“We are only focused on the game we’re going to play tomorrow, any other things not related to football is not in our minds at the moment. I’m not concerned at all,” he said. “My players need no more motivation than to play an Asian Cup final.”

The protest comes against a background of a political and economic boycott of Qatar which the UAE launched with Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Egypt in 2017. The four countries accuse Qatar of supporting terrorism, which it denies.

The political rift was manifest in Abu Dhabi on Tuesday when Emirati fans hurled sandals and drinks bottles at Ali and two other players celebrating their goals during the

semi-final.

The rift also means that almost no Qatari fans or media have been in the UAE to support and report on their run to a first continental final.

Meanwhile, Japan captain Maya Yoshida called on tournament organisers to deal swiftly with incidents of “stupidity” that risk damaging the reputation of Asian football.

The Asian Cup has seen its share of controversial refereeing decisions, with host UAE twice awarded soft late penalties that left

FOCUSED ON FINAL

We are only focused on the game we’re going to play tomorrow, any other things not related to football is not in our minds at the moment.

“

FELIX SANCHEZ, Qatar coach, on his team’s mentality as they approach today’s Asian Cup final against Japan.

rivals players and coaches fuming.

Japan’s semi-final victory over Iran also came close to boiling over, with Yoshida himself needing to be restrained by teammates after reacting furiously to a petulant slap from Sardar Azmoun.

“I think the AFC should control stuff about penalties and suspensions,” said the Southampton defender yesterday.

“If (the Cup) is broadcast all over the world, you don’t want to see any stupid things, especially after the game. We are representing Asia under the hashtag #bringingasiatogether, so it’s important to represent Asia by playing good football and with fair play.”

Japan enter the final as favourites to add to their record of four Asian Cup titles, but Qatar coach Sanchez insisted that the 2022 World Cup hosts were confident ahead of their first appearance in the final, after comfortably winning all six of their matches and keeping a record six clean sheets.

“To us, it’s no surprise that we are in the final,” he said. “I have full trust in the players, they are motivated to make history.”

REUTERS, AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

JAPAN V QATAR
Singtel TV Ch114 & StarHub Ch208, 9.30pm

Military experts to join search for missing plane

LONDON • British military investigators are to carry out an underwater search for the plane that vanished with the Argentinian footballer Emiliano Sala on board after his country’s government asked Britain to extend the hunt.

The development came as it emerged that two cushions believed to have come from the missing plane washed up on the coast of France, about 32km from the last known location of the aircraft.

Ministry of Defence salvage ex-

perts are to work alongside shipwreck specialists hired privately by Sala’s family to search for the plane, which vanished above the Channel Islands on Jan 21 en route from France to Cardiff.

Britain’s Air Accidents Investigation Branch (AAIB) has identified a “priority search area” of about four square nautical miles (14 sq km) where it believes the wreckage of the plane may lie. However, the start of this operation has been delayed by poor weather.

The active search for the Cardiff striker Sala and the pilot, David Ibbotson, was halted last Thursday by the Guernsey harbour master, sparking an outcry from Sala’s family and a host of Argentinian footballers including Barcelona superstar Lionel Messi.

On Wednesday evening, the Argentinian embassy in London suggested the search had been ramped up again after its intervention.

Earlier in the day, it emerged that two blue seat cushions believed to be from the plane had washed up on a French beach.

The AAIB said: “On the morning of Monday, Jan 28, we were advised by the Bureau d’Enquetes et d’Analyses, the French safety investigation authority, that part of a seat cushion had been found on a

beach near Surtainville on the Cotentin peninsula.

“A second cushion was found in the same area later that day. From a preliminary examination, we have concluded that it is likely that the cushions are from the missing aircraft.”

Shipwreck experts hired by Sala’s family with the help of hundreds of thousands of pounds of donations have been preparing to launch their own search.

This week, they revealed they were planning to use a remotely operated vehicle to comb an area of about 25 sq nautical miles and they believed there was a good chance of finding the plane.

Both Sala’s experts and the AAIB have said they will be able to work together. THE GUARDIAN

On-loan Suarez will be an asset to Arsenal: Emery

LONDON • Pundits and experts alike had predicted a quiet January transfer window and so it proved on deadline day yesterday, with Premier League clubs prioritising loan deals, often with an option to buy in the summer, rather than permanent signings.

Arsenal announced the signing of Spain midfielder Denis Suarez on loan from Barcelona for the rest of the term, with a view to purchase for £20 million (\$35.3 million) in the close season.

The 25-year-old will link up again with Unai Emery, whom he worked with during a loan spell at Sevilla in 2014-15.

The Gunners boss said on the club website: “He is a player we know well and he brings us quality and options in many different attacking positions.”

Suarez, who could make his debut on Sunday at his former club Manchester City, barely featured for the Spanish champions this season, with only two LaLiga appearances off the bench.

But he said he had come to the Emirates to play as much as possible and try to help the team qualify for the Champions League.

Endearing himself to the home faithful by claiming he would “like to win the Europa League with Arsenal”, he said: “(They) were a team that really inspired me. I used to watch (Dennis) Bergkamp and (Thierry) Henry. They’re both legends of the club and, hopefully, we can follow in their footsteps.”

Manchester United also strengthened their squad – by securing the long-term future of a key player.

They announced a new deal for Anthony Martial, whose contract situation had been uncertain earlier in the season, which will keep him at the club until 2024.

It is thought the France forward would have left had Jose Mourinho still been in charge, but his sacking and Ole Gunnar Solskjaer’s appointment as caretaker boss prompted the turnaround.

Solskjaer was also pleased that the 23-year-old, who has eight goals in 18 league games, had committed his best years to United, hailing him as “one of those naturally gifted players that any coach would love to work with”.

There was, however, an imminent exit at Old Trafford, with Marouane Fellaini agreeing a £10.4 million move to Chinese Super League outfit Shandong Luneng. Yesterday, the Belgium midfielder posted a picture of himself at the airport preparing to jet off to China on Instagram. According to the Daily Mail, the 31-year-old will earn £235,000 a week.

At press time, the biggest surprise of the window appeared to be Newcastle owner Mike Ashley finally dipping into his pockets to appease their long-suffering fans.

The Magpies broke their transfer record, which had stood for 14 years when they landed Michael Owen for £16.8 million in 2005, with the capture of Miguel Almiron from Major League Soccer side Atlanta for £21 million.

Rafael Benitez had been tracking the Paraguay midfielder, who is widely considered one of the best talents in the MLS, for a year and was delighted to have finally secured the 24-year-old’s services.

The manager told the club website: “His impact in MLS has been really good. He’s been one of the best players this year and, hopefully, he can give us more competition and more quality in the final third.” AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, THE TIMES, LONDON

SPORTS FIXTURES HIGHLIGHTS				
Event	Home	Away	Timing	Venue
Fri, 1 Feb 2019				
A League	Western Sydney	Newcastle Jets	4.50pm	LW
Asian Cup	Japan	Qatar	10.00pm	LW*
Sat, 2 Feb 2019				
German League	Hannover	RB Leipzig	3.30am	LW*
English League Champ	Preston	Derby	3.45am	LW*
French League	Lille	Nice	3.45am	LW*

LW* : Telecast not available at Livewire(Singapore Pools)
Visit singaporepools.com for the latest 'Live' telecast listing.

LOTTERY	
TOTO	Fri, 1 Feb 2019, 9.30pm Draw No. 3445/2019
Group 1 Prize	\$5,000,000 est.
Draw Venue: Singapore Pools (Private) Limited, 210 Middle Road, #01-01, Singapore 188994	
SINGAPORE SWEEP	Wed, 6 Feb 2019, 6.30pm Draw No.1006
	First Prize \$2,300,000
	9 sets of 2D winning numbers (315,000 prizes, each \$6)

Wishing You a

Happy Lunar New Year

Outlet Operating Hours & Draw Times

during Lunar New Year period

Eve of Lunar New Year

Outlets open till 4pm.

Mon, 4 Feb 2019

TOTO draw as usual.

1st day of Lunar New Year

Outlets will be closed.

Tue, 5 Feb 2019

2nd day of Lunar New Year

Usual operating hours will resume for outlets.

Wed, 6 Feb 2019

Singapore SWEEP draw as usual.

Normal operating hours for all Livewire venues throughout the Lunar New Year period except Livewire (Singapore Pools Building) which is open till 4pm on Eve of Lunar New Year, Mon, 4 Feb 2019 and 1pm - 6pm on Tue, 5 Feb 2019. Timing may vary across outlets.

Cheque payment
For prize amounts above \$5,000, please visit Singapore Pools Main Branch (210 Middle Road) for cheque collection. Note:
• Lunar New Year Eve (Mon, 4 Feb 2019): Close at 4pm
• First Day (Tue, 5 Feb 2019) and Second Day (Wed, 6 Feb 2019) of Lunar New Year: Close
• Third Day of Lunar Year (Thu, 7 Feb 2019): Open as usual
Due to the Lunar New Year period, longer than usual waiting time is expected. Thank you for your understanding.

No person under the age of 18 years shall be allowed to purchase a ticket or to claim any prize.
LW: Livewire (MBS) & Livewire (RWS) (21 years and above)
Livewire (Singapore Pools) (21 years and above during 'Live' telecast)
SB: Sportsbuzz@Crown (21 years and above)
Singapore Pools Account Service. Call 6796 6668 for more details.

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ELEVEN STAYS AFLOAT IN BRITAIN

Unable to get enough subscribers, it offloads Serie A, Eredivisie, Chinese league rights to rival

LONDON • Eleven Sports, the self-styled “Netflix of sport”, has saved its operations in the fiercely competitive Britain and Ireland markets from closure after reaching deals to offload the rights to Italy’s Serie A and continue coverage of Spain’s LaLiga.

In December, it emerged that the streaming service, which is thought to have attracted 50,000 subscriptions since its August launch, was unable to attract enough subscribers.

The company, which stopped its pay-TV operations in Singapore and became unavailable on Singtel TV from August last year, attempted to renegotiate rights deals at a much cheaper rate to try and avoid pulling the plug.

It has now concluded talks with IMG, which acts as the agent for Serie A rights, with the Britain and Ireland rights to move to Premier Sports from next month until 2021.

Premier Sports also picked up the rights to the Dutch Eredivisie and Chinese Super League from Eleven.

Eleven has also concluded a new agreement with LaLiga, giving it temporary breathing space to keep broadcasting matches until the end of the season. In the summer, it will have to negotiate another deal.

“The strategic direction we have chosen allows us to focus on LaLiga, which not only drives real value for us in the UK and Ireland but is also a property which we continue to have a valued partnership with in five markets globally,” said a spokesman for Eleven Sports, which is controlled by Leeds United owner Andrea Radrizzani.

The Italian businessman said last December that Eleven could not rely on Internet subscribers alone to make its British venture work and is working out distribution deals for his channel.

Eleven said that as a result of the cutback in sports content, existing and new subscribers will see the price of its monthly pass reduced from £5.99 (\$\$11) to £4.99 from next month.

Last November, it struck a deal with Scottish broadcaster STV to show two live LaLiga and Serie A games a week through its online



streaming service. Last October, it was forced to stop its controversial practice of broadcasting European games on Saturday afternoons after pressure from football stakeholders.

Eleven, which had outbid Sky and BT, Britain’s two largest sports broadcasters, for the rights that the two companies had previously owned, said that despite the setbacks it is still looking for new sports rights deals.

Endeavour, the Hollywood talent agency which owns Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC), the increasingly popular mixed martial arts competition, and IMG hold a minority stake in Eleven Sports UK & Ireland. Eleven, which also operates in markets including Poland and Portugal, is controlled via the holding company Aser, which in turn is controlled by Radrizzani.

Late last year, UFC opted to move back to previous rights holder BT with a new broadcast deal.

THE GUARDIAN

From March, to catch Cristiano Ronaldo in action for defending Italian champions Juventus in the Serie A, viewers in Britain and Ireland will have to switch to Premier Sports after Eleven Sports gave up the rights. Premier will hold the rights until 2021. PHOTO: REUTERS

Amanda tops regional qualifier to earn spot at HSBC event

SETTING THE BAR HIGH

(Finishing in) the top 10 would be nice. It will not be easy, but I am going to give my best and to enjoy and learn from the experience.

AMANDATAN, Singapore golfer, on her expectations for the HSBC Women's World Championship.

Wang Meng Meng

Pressure, they say, creates diamonds and having to compete with regional golfers for a slot at the HSBC Women's World Championship helped Amanda Tan to top a field of 18 and earn the right to join the elite later this month.

The Singaporean trailed by three strokes overnight and had doubts about her swing after the first of the two-day qualifying tournament, the first time it has been open to players from throughout the region.

But she harnessed the apprehension and strain and turned them into a positive mindset to claw her way to the top of the leaderboard yesterday.

She carded a two-under 70 for a 142 total to pip 16-year-old Thai Aripichaya Yubol (71) by two strokes at Sentosa Golf Club's New Tanjong Course to earn a sponsor's exemption.

Another Thai, Kanphanitan Muangkumsakul, 20, had begun the day as the overnight leader after a 69 on Wednesday but faded with a 79 to finish fourth.

Thai amateur Atthaya Thitikul, 15, was third on 146 after a 71.

Amanda, 19, said: "I was not feeling too great with my swing (on the opening day), but I tried to keep it (the ball) in play.

"And, if there was a chance for a birdie, I'd take it. If not, par would be good. I didn't think I would win until the last hole, last putt."

She will be part of a 63-player world-class field at the Feb 28-March 3 tournament which features defending champion Michelle Wie as well as the world's top 20 – led by Thailand's Ariya Jutanugarn and Korean duo Park Sung-hyun and Ryu So-yeon.

Said Amanda: "(Finishing in) the top 10 would be nice. It will not be easy, but I am going to give my best and to enjoy and learn from the experience.

"This tournament is special to me as it was my first pro event in 2014 and it's also my first event after I turned professional in 2017."

Previously, Singaporean players were given a slot after the completion of the national qualifying tournament. This year, the format was expanded to include 18 Asian golfers from six countries (China,



Singapore's Amanda Tan (142) pipped Thailand's Aripichaya Yubol by two strokes to win the regional qualifier for the HSBC Women's World Championship at Sentosa Golf Club's New Tanjong Course yesterday.

ST PHOTO: JASMINE CHOONG

Arpichaya added: "Because this is a big tournament, I feel it is okay for just one of us to qualify for the finals. That means, only the best can go."

meng@sph.com.sg

SINGAPORE HORSE RACING

FRIDAY,
1 FEBRUARY 2019
First race starts at 6.20pm

SUNDAY,
3 FEBRUARY 2019
First race starts at 1.20pm

Live telecast and totalisator services are available for the above race meetings at the Singapore Racecourse and Off-Course premises.

For the latest updates, visit www.turfclub.com.sg or call the Singapore Turf Club at 6879 1000.

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SINGAPORE TURF CLUB

For admission to the Club on race days, you must be at least 18 years of age.

European Tour defends its Saudi tournament

JEDDAH • European Tour chief executive Keith Pelley stood firm on its decision to hold an event in Saudi Arabia yesterday, saying that the world's second biggest golf tour had no intention of pulling out of the country.

It is holding its first event in the kingdom, the Saudi International, against a backdrop of criticism over the choice of venue in the wake of the murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi last October and its human rights record.

The US\$3.5 million (\$\$4.7 million) tournament and the players, including world No. 1 Justin Rose, have come under fire but Pelley said that the King Abdullah Economic City, a giant project on the Red Sea where it is being played, was transformational for the conservative country.

"It is a transformational city and they want golf to be part of that," said Pelley at the Sport Business Summit in Abu Dhabi. "It is geared towards a modern lifestyle to reduce the reliance on oil and, if we can play a part in that, fantastic."

Rose, meanwhile, said the players taking part were simply there to

back up the Tour's attempt to grow the sport in the Gulf region.

He said: "We're here to support the European Tour. For me, I can only commend their vision in terms of growing the game of golf. Between now and 2030, there's a big push here for golf.

"Hopefully, golf is a conduit to bridging the gap between this region and how we perceive golf in the western world."

The Englishman shot an even-par 70 in the opening round at the Royal Greens Golf and Country Club yesterday. The 38-year-old

heads a strong field which includes Brooks Koepka (69) and Dustin Johnson (68), the two Americans behind him in the world rankings. Thomas Pieters of Belgium had seven birdies to lead on 63.

Those in the 132-man field are not the only ones being quizzed over their participation, with music acts, including pop star Mariah Carey, rapper Sean Paul and DJ Tiesto, also heavily criticised.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, REUTERS

SAUDI INTERNATIONAL
Day 2: StarHub Ch204, 4pm & 7.30pm

SPORT

CELTICS MAINTAIN HOME FORM

Boston are 21-6 at TD Garden, among the NBA's best, but 11-13 away record continues to rankle

BOSTON • When it comes to protecting their home court, the Boston Celtics are among the very best teams in the National Basketball Association (NBA), with a 21-6 record this season.

But it is on their travels where Brad Stevens' players have fallen short, going 11-13 away from the TD Garden.

While it was again smooth sailing for Boston as they swatted aside the visiting Charlotte Hornets 126-94 on Wednesday for their seventh win in eight games, Terry Rozier admitted later that his team get "caught on the road, and sometimes, we take that for granted".

The guard, who filled in for the injured Kyrie Irving and had 17 points, 10 assists and five rebounds, told news website MassLive.com: "We've got to make it just as important as (if) we were playing at home. And obviously, every possession matters. We got to know that."

The Celtics have been trying to find the panacea for their travel woes all term to no avail.

"I have no clue," teammate Marcus Smart, who contributed three points, said. "If we knew what that was, we wouldn't be having these struggles."

"But it's part of the game, and that's what it is if I had to give a reason, I'd say it's just part of the game. We play 82 games in the regular season. It's a long season and things happen."

Jaylen Brown, who came off the bench to lead the Celtics with 24 points, claimed it was down to having "a whole new team".

He said: "We have a lot of guys who were here last year, (but) it's a different rhythm, it's a different environment and we're learning. Everybody's learning, adjusting on the fly and we're doing all right."

Their struggles to replicate their home form on the road can also be partly pinned on Gordon Hayward. Even though he contributed 12 points against Charlotte, the All-Star, who has yet to get back to his best after missing the whole of last season with a broken ankle, is having his worst term since he was a rookie, with an average of 10.7 points per game.

The forward conceded to The Boston Globe that his shooting slump was "obviously frustrating" and "some days are stones", but he did not want to dwell on the negatives as "you go through stretches like that".

However, coach Stevens is optimistic that Boston, who are fifth in the East, are still "on a steady path of progress" after a stellar January that saw them go 10-1 at home, with the only blemish being a defeat by the league's front runners, the Golden State Warriors.

He said: "We've had some bumps in the road like that three-game road trip, but we've made progress in a lot of areas and it probably shows in the offensive numbers."

"The defensive dips aren't as many, and that's all we're trying to do. We need to be as consistent as possible, but we need to show great progress. I'm encouraged, but I'm hesitant to be overjoyed until we keep doing it and doing it and doing it all the way through the season." REUTERS

PART OF THE GAME

But it's part of the game, and that's what it is if I had to give a reason, I'd say it's just part of the game... It's a long season and things happen.



MARCUS SMART, Boston Celtics' guard, on his team's difficulty in replicating their home form on the road.



Boston's Terry Rozier (right) taking a shot against Charlotte's Marvin Williams during the second half at Boston's TD Garden home on Wednesday. Rozier scored 17 points to help his team to a 126-94 victory over the Hornets. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

NFL poised to break into Chinese market

ATLANTA • The National Football League (NFL) will mark the end of an era when it celebrates its 100th season this year and could look to the future by playing a first game in China, with commissioner Roger Goodell on Wednesday labelling the country a "priority market".

Like every other major North American sports league, the NFL is looking to carve out a slice of the country's sports pie.

The National Basketball Association, after decades of nurturing, has seen China become its biggest foreign market, while the National Hockey League and Major League

Baseball have also established footholds there.

While the NFL is late to the party, it is ready to push into the marketplace of 1.3 billion people.

During his annual "state of league address" ahead of Sunday's Super Bowl between the New England Patriots and Los Angeles Rams, Goodell said: "I hope some time in the next couple of months, we are going to have some very exciting announcements."

"We believe that our game has a great deal of potential to expand and bring new fans into our game. We have had double-digit growth

this past year in China in our fan base and people engaging with our game. We're excited by it."

Although the NFL has made several aborted attempts to get a "China Bowl" off the ground, with failed plans to stage an exhibition game in Beijing in 2007 and 2009, it has continued to lay the groundwork for a move into the world's most populous country.

Last December, the NFL announced a digital partnership with Youku, Alibaba Group's video entertainment platform, to bring programming to local fans.

The Patriots' five-time Super

Bowl winning quarterback, Tom Brady, also travelled to Beijing to wave the NFL flag, paying a promotional visit to the Great Wall in 2017.

With the SportsBusiness Journal reporting the NFL is planning to organise a game in China as part of its 100th anniversary celebrations, the 41-year-old, who has expressed his desire to perform in front of a Chinese crowd before he hangs up his cleats, might get that chance.

In Europe, meanwhile, the NFL is going from strength to strength. It has already announced four regular-season games will take place in

London this year, with two at Wembley and two at Tottenham Hotspur's new ground.

But Goodell tempered expectations that the NFL franchise, despite having the requisite stadium, infrastructure and passionate fans.

He added: "The issue for us still is can we do this competitively for the team that is based in London and the other 31 clubs."

"That involves scheduling and other matters you don't want to compromise and until we get comfortable, I don't think we will be NFL-ready in London." REUTERS

SportsWorld

Coe eyeing a second term as IAAF chief

ABU DHABI • Former Olympic champion Sebastian Coe yesterday all but confirmed that he would run for a second term as president of the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) at the global governing body's congress in September.

The 62-year-old was elected to the post in Beijing in 2015 amid a storm of doping scandals and has spent much of his term trying to battle the use of banned substances.

Expressing his desire to transform track and field over the next few years by changing the competition structures to engage a wider and younger audience, the Briton told the Leaders Sport Business Summit he had "a passion to see that through". REUTERS

Pole Banka is Europe's choice to lead Wada

WARSAW • Poland's Sport Minister Witold Banka has been chosen as Europe's candidate to become the next head of the World Anti-Doping Agency (Wada), which has continued to face criticism over its handling of its Russian affiliate.

Banka had proposed establishing a separate funding mechanism to help countries with less developed anti-doping systems fight the problem.

Poland's Ministry of Sport and Tourism said on Wednesday that Wada would vote on a new president at a conference from Nov 5-7 in Katowice, Poland. REUTERS

Barca rout Sevilla to reach Cup semis

BARCELONA • Philippe Coutinho struck twice as Barcelona mounted a comeback to thrash Sevilla 6-1, sweeping into the semi-finals of the King's Cup with a 6-3 aggregate score on Wednesday.

After a 2-0 first-leg defeat in Sevilla last week in which they rested key players, the Spanish champions were ruthless at the Nou Camp with Ivan Rakitic, Sergi Roberto, Luis Suarez and Lionel Messi also getting on the scoresheet.

Real Betis, whose Benito Villamarin stadium will host the final on May 25, beat Espanyol 3-1 at home after extra-time to progress 4-1 on aggregate. REUTERS

Juventus boot out of Italian Cup

TURIN • Four-time defending champions Juventus crashed out of the Italian Cup on Wednesday with a 3-0 quarter-final defeat by Atalanta, while Roma suffered a humiliating 7-1 thrashing at the hands of Fiorentina.

Juventus had been bidding for a fifth consecutive Serie A and Cup double this season.

However, a brace from Duvan Zapata, which followed Timothy Castagne's opener, put the home side through to a semi-final meeting with Fiorentina. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Next 48 Hours

TODAY

BASKETBALL

ABL Malaysia Dragons v CLS Knights (StarHub Ch202, 8.30pm).

FOOTBALL

Asian Cup Final: Japan v Qatar (Singtel TV Ch114 & StarHub Ch208,

9.30pm).

GOLF

European Tour Saudi International: Day 2 (StarHub Ch204, 4pm & 7.30pm).

TOMORROW

BASKETBALL

ABL Mono Vampire v Zhuhai (StarHub Ch201, 4pm)

FOOTBALL

EPL Tottenham v Newcastle (8.30pm), Chelsea v Huddersfield (11pm), Cardiff

v Bournemouth (Sunday, 1.30am) – Singtel TV Ch102 & StarHub Ch227, Burnley v Southampton (Ch103 & Ch228, 10.50pm), Brighton v Watford (Ch104 & Ch229, 10.50pm), Palace v Fulham (Ch105 & Ch230, 10.50pm), Everton v Wolves (Ch106 & Ch231, 10.50pm). LaLiga Levante v Getafe (7.55pm),

Sociedad v Athletic (11.10pm), Barcelona v Valencia (Sunday, 1.25am) – StarHub Ch213.

GOLF

European Tour Saudi International: Day 3 (StarHub Ch204, 5.30pm).

RUGBY

World Sevens, Sydney Pool (StarHub Ch202, 6.30am, 11.45am & 3.15pm).

Live telecast times are subject to change. For latest updates, go to singtelv.com.sg & starhubgo.com or check the on-screen TV guide.

life

D **HEART OF GOLD**
Taiwanese star
Lin Chi-ling is
big on charity
D3



Our hawker centres are social spaces where we can meet our neighbours, share a common space with strangers and strike up conversations with them over a hearty meal.

Klinsen Soh, 27, Male

Pledge your support for Singapore's Hawker Culture at www.oursgheritage.sg



Luxury labels bank on the pig

To tap the Asian market, high-end brands are releasing collections to tie in with the Year of the Pig



For its latest capsule collection, Italian luxury brand Gucci has looked to the classic story of the Three Little Pigs for inspiration. Over at French fashion label Louis Vuitton, one can find accessories such as a pig-shaped key holder and pink scarf with an abstract piglet print. So what's the deal with the pig-inspired fashion? The luxury fashion brands are going the whole hog to capture the

lucrative Chinese market. It is, after all, the Year of the Pig from Feb 5. According to a 2017 study done by global management consultancy Bain & Company, Chinese consumers spend about 600 billion yuan (\$120.7 billion) on luxury goods annually – nearly a third of the global market share. In the last few years, more international luxury labels have released Chinese New Year collections associated with zodiac animals such as the dog and the rooster. Retail experts say global brands are localising certain collections to appeal to the large customer base in China and grow their market share there. Adjunct Associate Professor Lynda Wee, from Nanyang Technological University's Nanyang Business School, says fashion labels cannot ignore the Chinese market due to its high revenue contribution. In addition, other Asian countries, including Singapore, also celebrate Chinese New Year and luxury brand consumers may buy into these special collections, she adds. “Chinese New Year is a huge celebration for the Chinese, and Asian countries such as Cambodia

celebrate it too. These should be major market contributors in terms of sales revenue for the brands' Asian segments.” So it makes sense for the brands to curate festive merchandise for customers to “complete their lifestyle needs”, she says. Mr Amos Tan, a senior lecturer at Singapore Polytechnic's School of Business, agrees that China is “where the money is”. “Without a doubt, China is where the Asian economy is the strongest. If a brand can gain market share there, then they could definitely rejuvenate their growth.” He adds that while luxury brands could rely on their international appeal in the past, increased competition for market share in China in recent years means that brands have to take a different approach. “The market is so saturated now. So the strategy is to localise products so that customers feel the brand is relevant to them and use their own culture to appeal to them because people want this deeper connection.” The Straits Times checks out some pig-inspired accessories and clothing from different luxury fashion brands.

melheng@sph.com.sg

1

1. Women's ace sneaker with three little pigs, \$1,080, from Gucci (above)

2

2. Pig bag charm and key holder, \$660, from Louis Vuitton

3

3. Mini bucket bag in natural white lambskin and smooth calfskin, \$2,840, from Chloe

4

4. Limited-edition sneakers, \$1,150, from Tods

5

5. Pig silk square, \$175, from Coach

6

6. Pure silk scarf with pig print, \$550, from Ferragamo

7

7. Silk square with pink piglet design, \$665, from Louis Vuitton

2

2. Pig bag charm and key holder, \$660, from Louis Vuitton

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MORE PRODUCTS on D2

Sparkle in the Year of the Pig

Here are some jewellery and beauty products inspired by the pig and designed to make you look good for Chinese New Year

1. 18 karat gold necklace with ruby and diamonds, \$6,450, from Bvlgari
This special-edition necklace has a central ruby which the luxury label says symbolises good fortune and joy.

2. Golden pig collection Age Reverse Cushion, \$80, from Hera
This cushion compact offers lightweight medium coverage. The formula also contains ingredients that the label says help reduce the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles over time.

3. Happy with piglet collection Jelly Mousse Blusher, \$18.90, from Etude House
This mousse blusher with a soft blendable texture creates a sheer pink finish.

4. Chinese New Year limited-edition Facial Treatment Essence, \$269, from SKII
The design of this bold red limited-edition bottle of SKII's iconic facial essence features a playful swirl that is meant to be a modern interpretation of a pig's tail.

5. Ambient Lighting Blush in Vivid Flush, \$67, from Hourglass
A limited-edition shade for Chinese New Year, this rosy pink blush with light-diffusing powder will help give your cheeks a natural radiant glow.

6. 18 karat rose gold vermeil on sterling silver bracelet, \$795, from Monica Vinader
To celebrate Chinese New Year, the label has created a pendant charm in the shape of a pig.

7. Red piggy bank, \$54, from Benefit
This adorable piggy tin contains a lip tint, an eyebrow pencil and a mascara.

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FROM D1

Porcine chic



8. Metropolis crossbody bag, \$745, from Furla



9. T-shirt with pig motif, \$840, from Chloe

10. Mr Bags x Longchamp Le Pliage Cuir top handle bag, \$790, from Longchamp



PHOTOS: COURTESY OF GUCCI, BENEFIT, BVLGARI, CHLOE, ETUDE HOUSE, FERRAGAMO, FURLA, HERA, HOURGLASS, LONGCHAMP, LOUIS VUITTON, MONICA VINADER, SKII, TOD

Making runway fashion work for you

Gordon Ng

A common thread on the runways for Spring/Summer 2019 was a sense of travel and escape.

And who can blame designers, given a political and financial climate full of turbulence and real-world doldrums?

The imagined destinations are warm, sunny and, naturally, optimistic.

EASY BREEZY

Singapore is seasonally and geographically perfect then to co-opt floral prints and breezy silhouettes.

At Chanel, Karl Lagerfeld took the house's tweeds to the beach. The brand's classic jacket shapes were paired with shorts and jeans – an insouciant and casual combination that is easy to replicate. In the spirit of ease, keep your jeans loosely fitted and breezy.

You might also take inspiration from Chloe, where the young designer Natacha Ramsay-Levi created a modern hippie vision. Think of scarf prints in silk fabrics loosely draped over the body in tunic shapes and casually belted.

The idea is a vacationer's free-flowing leisure, so opt for loose shapes in natural fabrics that breathe.

You can take inspiration too from Loewe, where British designer Jonathan Anderson has turned the heritage house's fashion into modern bohemian par excellence. The arts and crafts approach offers a host of ideas for mixing prints, textures and details.

Shiny fabrics such as silk and satin contrast wonderfully against the grain of fine knits and linens. Top that mix off with fringe, tassels, or a trendy straw bag and you have a sophisticated melange ready to go.

SUIT YOURSELF

Take it from the biggest designers: Tailoring is back in fashion. What used to be staid and a symbol of fashion's rigidity has resurfaced as a symbol of resistance to athleisure and casual streetwear.

Far from being difficult, suiting is actually one of the easiest ways to plan an outfit. Everything falls comfortably in place when you have the parts.

The twist in tailoring this season continues to come from Balenciaga, where maverick designer Demna Gvasalia explores what a modern tailored silhouette could be.

His definition of this is a sharply defined dramatic shoulder to channel femme fatale strength. This is easy enough to appropriate by searching out jackets with shoulder pads.

The season's prevailing mood with suits, however, is free and easy. Suitwear from designers such as Stella McCartney and Victoria Beckham is far from nipped and wear louche and relaxed. Maintain a gender-neutral silhouette and remember to keep the trousers wide-legged and roomy like palazzos for optimum chic.

A compelling contrast, on the other hand, could be a slightly oversized jacket paired with cigarette trousers. The fit-and-flare silhouette plays best with darker colours and is almost always faultless when worn with a T-shirt tucked in.

COUTURE SHAPES

Fashion these days is leaning towards the classicism of its own past and haute couture has been a goldmine of references. The shapes and silhouettes of couture, especially, have been used and updated by a host of designers for this spring season.

Dries Van Noten's collection taps those elements and combines them with utilitarian details for a wholly modern take. Think of beautiful coats, cut light in technical fabrics so they are weather appropriate. Or the gesture of a humble white T-shirt wrapped with a black bow, a classic motif of haute couture.

Meanwhile, Italian house Valentino is undergoing a sort of couture renaissance and designer Pierpaolo Piccioli's unerring eye is creating a new vocabulary of sophistication that is ripe for the picking.

The showstoppers at Valentino are indubitably its gowns and the style these days is one colour throughout, rendered voluminous and sweeping in a simple fabric. In the spirit of couture, gun for ruffles, draping, bows, knots and twists. Remember, however, to keep it updated with a restrained colour palette.



Above: Valentino styles its gowns in solid colours and full of volume. Far left: Chanel Chanel with a tweed outfit. Left: Animal prints are still on trend, featuring on the runways of labels such as Emporio Armani. PHOTOS: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, EPA-EFE

You can also refer to Marc Jacobs, who showed a collection that essentially glorified and blew up the couture tropes of the 1980s – drama, flair, ruffles and even feathers. The va-va-voom excess of the runway might be hardly wearable, but it offers a rich source of inspiration. Dial the drama down until it works for you.

ANIMAL MAGNETISM

Stalking the catwalks this season was a glut of animal prints. Snake-skin, for example, made appearances at brands such as Saint Laurent, Miu Miu and Versace.

While the designers' bold statements might come sometimes as whole dresses in the print, you could go a subtler route and use it as a pop of detail or as an accessory with bags.

The key is to choose a muted colourway so the texture acts as an accent rather than a scene-stealer.

Autumn's neon trend also found itself meshed into acid green snake-

skin patterns at Emporio Armani and Off-White.

At Armani, the pattern appeared on a luxurious unstructured jacket. And at Off-White, it was on nearly every form imaginable, from coats and dresses to shorts and trousers. Those seeking to stand out need look no further than to these "bright ideas".

At Burberry, where Italian designer Riccardo Tisci made his debut for the British brand, prints of leopard, zebra and cow were gleefully mixed. The result was a visual feast.

To appropriate it, steer yourself towards denser prints so the effect is a slightly abstract graphic. Or borrow from Raf Simon's playbook on the 205W39NYC runway, which used leopard prints in varying scales and different tints.

The goal, once again, is to subvert the animal distinction and play up the graphic impact.

• Gordon Ng is a freelance fashion writer.

Minutes&Seconds



Lin Chi-ling takes negative publicity, an unsavoury aspect of celebrity, in her stride.
PHOTO: LONGINES

Lin Chi-ling pays it forward

Becoming friends with a cancer patient led the Taiwanese model-actress to set up a charity foundation

Wong Kim Hoh

Lin Chi-ling reaches out and gently takes my digital voice recorder.

“Come, let me help you,” the Taiwanese model and actress coos, positioning the gadget, which she holds with both hands, in front of her lips, to record what she is saying.

The 44-year-old is a vision of femininity as she holds court in a suite at the Shangri-La Hotel in Orange Grove Road, her slender 1.74m frame sheathed in an elegant sartorial confection of silk and organza.

Her cream and peaches complexion, large limpid eyes with long lashes, full rosy lips and a perfect set of pearly whites have set many male hearts fluttering in Taiwan, China, Japan and other parts of Asia.

It’s not hard to like her – she is chatty, laughs easily and has the ability to make you feel as though you have her undivided attention.

In her breathy little girl voice, she laments that although 2018 passed too quickly, it ended on a high and meaningful note for her.

Last November, Forbes magazine named her one of its 40 Heroes Of

Philanthropy for the year.

She was the only celebrity in a list which lauded individuals who contributed to charity from their personal funds. Other honourees included Mr Kazuo Inamori, who founded Japanese electronics conglomerate Kyocera, as well as China’s Zhang Lei, founder of Hillhouse Capital Group.

In the last three years, Lin – an ambassador for Swiss watchmaker Longines – has donated US\$1.6 million (S\$2.2 million) to China’s Nest Building Fund to build dormitories for underprivileged schoolchildren in remote parts of China. She raised another US\$1.6 million through The Chiling Charity Foundation, which she set up in 2011, to help poor families and children, as well as to fund disaster relief projects in Taiwan.

“Over the years, I’ve sometimes wondered if I was on the right track with my charity work. The Forbes list was significant because it’s telling me I am and to please continue. It’s extremely meaningful,” says Lin, who was in Singapore recently to officiate the opening of a Longines boutique in Wisma Atria.

She started her foundation after she met and became fast friends with a young woman dying from a rare form of cancer in Taiwan.

“She told me: ‘Forget all the gossip in the entertainment industry. If you want to be remembered, you should do all the meaningful things you want to do now.’”

“She also said she would be there for me if I started a charity foundation. A few months after I did, she died. She was just 25, she was someone who changed my life.”

Lin adds: “I made a promise and it’s a lifetime promise. I will continue to give all I can.”

Her foundation has two main areas of focus: children and education.

“Children are the foundation of our society and they need education because that’s the key to the future. I’ve been given so much, I just want to pay it forward,” says the celebrity, whose work with brands including China Airlines, LG and Olay has made her one of the highest-paid models in Asia.

The younger of two children of a businessman and his wife, the leggy beauty started modelling part-time after she was discovered by a talent scout at age 15.

Being in show business, however, was not her game plan.

“I was hoping to be a curator in a museum or an auction house. Or a journalist,” says Lin, who graduated with a double degree in art history and economics from the University of Toronto in 1997.

Her hopes of snagging a job with

the Taipei Fine Arts Museum did not pan out, but her career as a model took flight, especially after she appeared in an advertisement for a beauty product on Hong Kong television in 2002.

The following year, her looks and fluency in Mandarin, English and Japanese landed her a gig as the host of a fashion programme on Shanghai Oriental Television.

“It was amazing. I’d never gone to Europe, but suddenly, I found myself in Paris interviewing Karl Lagerfeld. I was like: ‘Are you serious?’ And John Galliano. ‘Really?’,” she says.

By 2004, she was the top model in Taiwan, earning accolades like Bikini Goddess and Miss Perfection. That year, she also hosted The Golden Horse Awards – the Oscars of the Chinese film industry – stealing the limelight with eight costume changes.

Modelling jobs also poured in from China and Japan. The “Lin Chiling Phenomenon” (coined by a wit to describe her meteoric rise to fame) even rubbed off on Japanese porn actresses like Yui Hatano, who was dubbed “AV Lin Chiling” by fans in Taiwan and China. AV means adult video.

An accident in 2005 – Lin fractured six ribs and punctured her left lung after she fell off a horse while shooting a commercial in China – proved serendipitous.

“I thought it was a sign to maybe stop, think about life and chart the right direction. Then John Woo offered me an amazing role,” she says, referring to the Hong Kong film-maker who cast her as ancient

I was hoping to be a curator in a museum or an auction house. Or a journalist.



LIN CHI-LING, who graduated with a double degree in art history and economics from the University of Toronto in 1997, on how she did not plan to be in show business

Chinese beauty Xiao Qiao in his two-part war epic Red Cliff. The 2008 film, set in the third century, also stars Tony Leung Chiu Wai and Takeshi Kaneshiro.

Her acting skills came in for some drubbing, but she has since made nearly 20 movies, including last year’s The Monkey King 3, where she plays the River God; and fantasy adventure The Faces Of My Gene, as the love interest of a time-travelling unattractive writer.

Negative publicity is an unsavoury aspect of celebrity she has come to terms with.

“I don’t take it personally. People can talk about you without any responsibility online, but why do you want to be affected by someone you don’t even know?” says the model-actress, whose relationship with Taiwanese heart-throb Jerry Yan made headlines for many years.

“It’s your life and happiness, you’ve got to take control of it. The most important thing is to have a positive and healthy attitude,” she declares, adding that she is happily single but has not given up on love.

The Longines ambassador wrinkles her nose when asked what time – the past, present and future – means to her.

“I wouldn’t change anything about my past. It is what makes me who I am today.

“You just have to live in the present and not procrastinate over things you want to do.”

And the future?
“Just be open. And hopeful.”

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Chatting about i Light Singapore, singer Craig David

Tune in to ST podcast Life Picks, in which Life reporters highlight the best films, concerts, restaurants and arts events.

This week, Life reporters Anjali Raguraman and Toh Wen Li chat with host Melissa Sim about some of the exciting works from i Light Singapore, which runs till Feb 24, and singer Craig David, who will spin and sing at Zouk on Feb 14.



Life reporters (from far left) Anjali Raguraman, Toh Wen Li and Melissa Sim tell listeners about i Light Singapore and musician Craig David.

PHOTO: THE STRAITS TIMES

SCAN TO LISTEN
http://str.sg/obk6



Gigs Picks

Anjali Raguraman recommends

CHROMEO (DJ SET) BY COLLECTIVE MINDS X KILO LOUNGE

Get ready for groovy bass lines and electro-funk with Canadian duo Chromeo. Formed in 2002 by Montreal natives David "Dave 1" Macklovitch (right) and Patrick "P-Thugg" Gemayel (far right), the self-proclaimed "Funklordz" are stopping by Kilo Lounge as part of their South-east Asia tour. **WHERE:** Kilo Lounge, 01-02, 21 Tanjong Pagar Road **MRT:** Tanjong Pagar **WHEN:** Today, 10pm to 3am **ADMISSION:** \$55 for advance tickets via bit.ly/ChromeoSG or \$65 at the door. For 18 years and above only



PAULETTE MCWILLIAMS WITH NAT ADDERLEY JR

R&B legend Luther Vandross' music director Nat Adderley Jr brings together the best of R&B, jazz and soul at jazz club Cool Cats. The pianist and music arranger team up with singer Paulette McWilliams (above), who has recorded and toured with Vandross, and performed alongside greats such as Aretha Franklin, Bette Midler and Marvin Gaye. **WHERE:** Cool Cats, The NCO Club, JW Marriott South Beach, 32 Beach Road **MRT:** Esplanade **WHEN:** Today and tomorrow, 9.30 and 11.15pm **ADMISSION:** No cover charge. Reservations required. Book tables via bit.ly/CoolCatsSG



PHOTOS: COLLECTIVE MINDS, VAMP PRODUCTIONS

PROM NIGHT – VALENTINE'S DAY SPECIAL

Flashback to the 1980s at retro arcade bar Nineteen80, as it hosts a prom-themed night, complete with slow dancing and tunes by Bryan Adams, Air Supply and Whitney Houston.

All-night drinks specials include cocktail jugs at \$45 nett, red/white wine bottles at \$65 nett and champagne bottles at \$120 nett. **WHERE:** Nineteen80, 01-05, 21 Tanjong Pagar Road **MRT:** Tanjong Pagar **WHEN:** Feb 14, 8pm till late **ADMISSION:** Open from 5.30pm, with free entry all night. For table reservations, e-mail insertcoin@nineteen80.sg or call 9183-6073



CRAIG DAVID PRESENTS TS5

Spend Valentine's Day with smooth crooner Craig David (left), who brings his popular DJ show TS5 to Zouk's main room. Named after his Miami apartment Tower Suite 5, his shows combine a live DJ set and live vocals. Expect classic tunes such as 7 Days and Fill Me In, as well as newer tracks off his 2018 album The Time Is Now. **WHERE:** Zouk, The Cannery, 3C River Valley Road **MRT:** Clarke Quay **WHEN:** Feb 14, 10pm to 1am **ADMISSION:** \$88 for advance tickets via bitly.com/CRAIGDAVIDSG or \$100 at the door. For 18 years and above only

GIGS

Gerhana Skacinta 20th Anniversary Tour Live In Singapore

Malaysian ska band Gerhana Skacinta have appeared at festivals in Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia. For their gig here, the band will perform their evergreen tracks Mimpi and This Is Ska. **WHERE:** Esplanade Concert Hall, 1 Esplanade Drive **MRT:** Esplanade/ City Hall **WHEN:** Thu, 7.30pm **ADMISSION:** \$28 - \$58 **TEL:** 6348-5555 **INFO:** www.sistic.com.sg

Golden Prosperous Year

Celebrate Chinese New Year with local getai singers Wang Lei, Hao Hao, Li Pei Fen, Bao Bei Sisters, Zhong Jin Ling, Zheng Ying Ying, and veteran Malaysian singers Huang Xiao Feng and Zhuang Xue Zhong. **WHERE:** Resorts World Theatre, Resorts World Sentosa, 8 Sentosa Gateway **MRT:** HarbourFront **WHEN:** Feb 10, 1 & 4pm **ADMISSION:** \$38 - \$88 **TEL:** 6348-5555 **INFO:** www.sistic.com.sg

Blackpink World Tour

South Korean girl group Blackpink will perform not only their hit songs, but also remix versions. The concert is brought in by Live Nation and One Production. **WHERE:** Singapore Indoor Stadium, 2 Stadium Walk **MRT:** Stadium **WHEN:** Feb 15, 7.30pm **ADMISSION:** \$128 - \$268, tickets at sportshubtx.sg, Singapore Indoor Stadium Box Office & SingPost outlets **TEL:** 3158-7888

Raghu Dixit Live

Indian singer-composer Raghu Dixit's unique brand of infectious, happy

music transcends age, genre and language. His music is strongly rooted in Indian traditions and culture and he is known for presenting ancient Kannada poetry with a contemporary, global sound. **WHERE:** Capitol Theatre, 17 Stamford Road **MRT:** City Hall **WHEN:** Feb 16, 7.30pm **ADMISSION:** \$40 - \$100, tickets & information available at showtickets.asia

Na Ying Na World Tour Concert

Na Ying is considered one of the best female singers in China, having sold more than 10 million albums. She gained fame with the release of her hit single Conquer in 1998, which became one of the most popular Chinese songs in history. **WHERE:** Resorts World Ballroom, Resorts World Convention Centre, 8 Sentosa Gateway **MRT:** HarbourFront **WHEN:** Feb 23, 8pm **ADMISSION:** \$48 - \$288 **TEL:** 6348-5555 **INFO:** www.sistic.com.sg

CHARITY

Speaker Tan Chuan-Jin's Photo Exhibition

Speaker of Parliament Tan Chuan-Jin is raising funds for vulnerable communities here and abroad through his photography project, which showcases images from his travels over the years. Visitors can buy prints of the images in various forms, from postcards (\$50 for 15 postcards in a folder) to a Special Photo Book Set (\$1,000) and Premium Photo Book Set (\$5,000) that are autographed by Mr Tan. Exclusive metal prints (\$10,000 each) will be autographed and personally presented by Mr Tan during a high-tea session. Among the beneficiaries is The Straits Times School Pocket Money Fund.

WHERE: Level 2 Concourse, Far East Plaza, 14 Scotts Road **MRT:** Orchard **WHEN:** Today - Feb 28, 11am - 7pm **ADMISSION:** Free **INFO:** www.spmf.org.sg

SPORTS

Super Rugby – Sunwolves Vs Sharks

This year's Super Rugby season kicks off with a match between Singapore's adopted home team, Hito-Communications Sunwolves, who won their first match here last year, and South Africa's Sharks. **WHERE:** National Stadium, Singapore Sports Hub, 1 Stadium Drive **MRT:** Stadium **WHEN:** Feb 16, 6.55 - 8.15pm **ADMISSION:** From \$10 **INFO:** sportshub.com.sg/SuperRugby

TALKS

From Embarrassment To Icon: A Biography Of Raffles After His Death

This talk by Timothy Barnard will survey and analyse the commemoration of Singapore's founder, Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles, in the first 75 years of colonial rule, through the commissioning of statues and the attachment of his name to establishments and institutions. **WHERE:** Ngee Ann Auditorium (basement), Asian Civilisations Museum, 1 Empress Place **MRT:** Raffles Place **WHEN:** Feb 11, 11am **ADMISSION:** Free **TEL:** 6337-3685 **INFO:** www.fom.sg

Unmasking Plastic Surgery

Learn how plastic surgery can help relieve pain, rebuild the body and restore confidence at this public forum by the Singapore General Hospital. Topics include scars, lasers,

ageing gracefully, droopy eyelids and rebuilding the body after cancer. **WHERE:** Mochtar Riady Auditorium, SMU Admin Building, 81 Victoria Street **MRT:** Bras Basah/ City Hall **WHEN:** March 2, 9am - noon **ADMISSION:** Free, register at <https://bit.ly/2TiWC3L> **TEL:** 6576-2581/6576-7859 (office hours) **INFO:** E-mail Siti.Nabilah.zaine@sgh.com.sg or Muhammad.Shaheed.mohd.isa@sgh.com.sg

CLASSES

Valentine's Day Brush Lettering Workshop

Marmalade Pantry Downtown and SplashRunway Designs are conducting a beginner's brush lettering workshop with a Valentine's Day theme. Participants get to take home limited-edition brush lettering worksheets, a brush pen and a card that will be done in the class. The workshop includes brunch with coffee, tea or juice. **WHERE:** The Marmalade Pantry Downtown, 01-01 Oasia Hotel Downtown, 100 Peck Seah Street **MRT:** Tanjong Pagar **WHEN:** Feb 9, 11.30am - 2.30pm **ADMISSION:** \$88++ a person (\$68++ for MasterCard holders), includes brunch; sign up at order.themarmaladepantry.com.sg **INFO:** themarmaladepantry.com.sg

Phonetics Workshop

Find out how phonetics can help you speak better and communicate more effectively. Children as young as nine can join the class, which is conducted by Mr Joseph Wong, principal consultant at Delapro and an Acta-certified trainer, who specialises in communication, with a focus on phonetics. **WHERE:** 05-01 LTC Building D,

16 Arumugam Road **MRT:** MacPherson **WHEN:** Feb 16, 9am - 6pm **ADMISSION:** \$180, claimable through SkillsFuture Credit **INFO:** E-mail josephwong@delapro.com.sg

The Role Of A Director With K.Rajagopal

Veteran film-maker K. Rajagopal shares what makes a good director and how a director can inspire his cast and crew to harness their talents for the film. Topics include creative approaches to shooting a film, working with actors and crew members and a director's responsibilities. **WHERE:** Objectifs – Centre for Photography and Film, 155 Middle Road **MRT:** Bencoolen/ Bugis **WHEN:** Feb 20, 7.30 - 10pm **ADMISSION:** Free **INFO:** E-mail ciNE65@objectifs.com.sg to register

ST English Masterclass (The Executive Edition Special: Creative Writing)

This course is conducted by Felix Cheong, who has published 13 books across various genres, from poetry to short stories. The recipient of the Young Artist award, who has worked in the media industry for more than 20 years, he teaches journalism at the University of Newcastle and Murdoch University. He will cover topics such as the basics of narrative writing; generating story ideas and creating characters, plots, twists and endings as well as turning life experience into stories and the publishing process. **WHERE:** SPH News Centre, 1000 Toa Payoh North **MRT:** Braddell **WHEN:** Feb 21, 10am - 6pm (lunch provided) **ADMISSION:** \$499 a person, sign up at stskills.sg **TEL:** 6319-5076 **INFO:** E-mail stmasterclass@sph.com.sg

FOOD

PROMOTIONS

New Italian Delights At Dolce Vita

Italian restaurant Dolce Vita has more than 10 new dishes, including Barbabietola (salad), pan-seared octopus with creamy potatoes, confit datterino and taggiasca olives; and Fregola Sarda, poached red shrimps on bead-shaped pasta.

WHERE: Mandarin Oriental Singapore, 5 Raffles Avenue **MRT:** Promenade **WHEN:** Lunch: noon - 2.30pm (weekdays); brunch: noon - 3pm (weekends); dinner: 6.30 - 10.30pm daily **PRICE:** Call to inquire **TEL:** 6885-3500 **INFO:** E-mail mosin-dining@mohg.com

CHINESE NEW YEAR

Chopsuey Lo Hei & Giggling Pig Cocktail

Chopsuey Cafe's Lucky Lunar Lo Hei (\$28++ for half, \$48++ for full) offers a different take on yusheng with trout, kale, celeriac, sprouts, red radish, blueberries and wild rice. The bar team has also created a cocktail called The Giggling Pig (\$21++), which combines cognac with Cointreau topped with strawberry bak kwa. **WHERE:** 01-23, 10 Dempsey Road **MRT:** Botanic Gardens **WHEN:** Till Feb 19, 11.30am - 4pm & 6 - 11pm **PRICE:** Lo Hei: \$28++ - \$48++, cocktail \$21++ **TEL:** 9224-6611 **INFO:** pscafe.com

Feasts Of Prosperity At Rise

Welcome Chinese New Year at Rise with dishes such as eight treasures rice, braised pork knuckle and almond soup with glutinous rice dumpling. **WHERE:** Lobby Hotel Tower 1, Marina Bay Sands, 10 Bayfront Avenue **MRT:** Bayfront **WHEN:** Till Feb 19 (except Feb 14) **PRICE:** Lunch: from \$68++ an adult, \$25++ a child; dinner: from \$88++ an adult, \$38++ a child **TEL:** 6688-5525 **INFO:** E-mail Rise@MarinaBaySands.com

Li Bai's Festive Highlights And Set Menus

Celebrate at home with festive offerings from Li Bai Cantonese Restaurant. These include the Lo Hei Platters Of Fortune with abalone (\$93+ for small/\$168+ for large), lobster (\$128+/\$238+) or salmon (\$68+/\$118+). There is also a vegetarian version (\$55+/\$92+). Other takeaways include traditional nian gao with red dates and lotus seeds (\$50+) and Signature Buddha Jumps Over The Wall with three-head abalone (\$520+). For dine-in, there are set menus for two to 10 people, with dishes such as braised superior bird's nest with lobster claw, and stewed fish noodles with Alaskan crabmeat and X.O. chilli sauce. **WHERE:** Sheraton Towers Singapore, 39 Scotts Road **MRT:** Newton **WHEN:** Till Feb 19, noon - 2.30pm & 6 - 10pm **PRICE:** Takeaways: \$50+ - \$520++; set menus: \$1038++ (eight people) - \$3,488++ (10 people) **TEL:** 6839-5623 **INFO:** E-mail libai@sheratonsingapore.com

Fortune Congee From Mui Kee

Enjoy a taste of comfort and tradition at Mui Kee, which is offering three festive dishes. Fortune Congee (\$10.90++) comes with dried mussels and moss, while Abundant Harvest (\$16.80++) comprises lotus root, carrot, snow pea, celery, baby corn, wood-ear mushroom and red bell pepper. Treasure Seafood Pot (\$68.80++) contains abalone, Alaskan crab leg, Hokkaido scallop, dried mussels, mushroom and moss. **WHERE:** 01-12 Shaw Centre, 1 Scotts Road **MRT:** Orchard **WHEN:** Till Feb 28 (closed this Mon & Tue), 11.30am - 9.30pm **PRICE:** \$10.90++ - \$68.80++ **TEL:** 6737-2422 **INFO:** muikkee.com.sg

Reunion Buffet Dinner White Rose Cafe

For the Reunion Buffet Dinner at White Rose Cafe, groups of at least four people will get a complimentary traditional Prosperity Lo Hei platter. The feast features delicacies such as

braised shark's fin soup with crabmeat, eight treasures chicken and stir-fried flower crab with chilli. **WHERE:** Lobby level, York Hotel Singapore, 21 Mount Elizabeth **MRT:** Orchard **WHEN:** Mon, 6.30 - 10pm **PRICE:** \$62++ an adult, \$30 a child aged five - 11 **TEL:** 6737-0511 **INFO:** E-mail whiterosecafe@yorkhotel.com.sg

Prosperity Buffet At Carlton's Cafe Mosaic

The Prosperity Buffet at Cafe Mosaic offers seafood on ice, festive dishes such as braised fish maw soup and BBQ delights such as Peking duck. Mains include braised duck with sea cucumber and Chinese mushroom. **WHERE:** Carlton Hotel Singapore, 76 Bras Basah Road **MRT:** City Hall **WHEN/PRICE:** Mon dinner (6 - 10pm): \$88++ an adult, \$42++ a child; Tue & Wed lunch (noon - 2.30pm): \$68++ an adult, \$34++ a child; Tue & Wed dinner

(6 - 10pm): \$78++ an adult, \$39++ a child **TEL:** 6311-8195 **INFO:** E-mail cafe.mosaic@carltonhotel.sg

VALENTINE'S DAY

Call Me Cupid At Wakanui Grill

Wakanui Grill's seven-course Valentine's Day Menu offers two options for couples - individual mains (\$228++ for two) or mains to share (\$288++). Dishes include spring lamb chop and chargrilled eel with foie gras. The Black Angus beef tomahawk or 1kg Ocean Beef OP ribeye is for sharing, while couples who prefer variety can enjoy a choice of Black Angus beef cube roll, Ocean Beef gyu katsu or Boston lobster thermidor. **WHERE:** 04-02 Marina One The Heart, 5 Straits View **MRT:** Downtown **WHEN:** Feb 8 - 16, 5.30 - 10.30pm **PRICE:** \$228++ - \$288++ a couple **TEL:** 6384-2665 **INFO:** E-mail enquiries@wakanui.sg

LeVeL33 In The Mood For Love

Designed to be shared, the Valentine's Day menu at urban microbrewery LeVeL33 will take couples through the different feelings sparked by love that are related to tastes such as sweet and bitter. **WHERE:** 33-01 Marina Bay Financial Centre Tower 1, 8 Marina Boulevard **MRT:** Downtown **WHEN:** Feb 13 - 15, 6pm **PRICE:** \$148++ a person **TEL:** 6834-3133 **INFO:** level33.com.sg

Say Ti Amo At Zafferano

Zafferano Italian Restaurant & Lounge offers a Romantic Terrace Experience with a three-course sharing platter and bottle of Spumante wine, a five-course Say Ti Amo menu and a three-course Sunset menu. Highlights include a Tajima wagyu beef tartare appetiser and mains such as roasted red mullet and oven-baked Bresse pigeon in corn

leaves, salt crust roasted corn puree and red currant. **WHERE:** Level 43 Ocean Financial Centre, 10 Collyer Quay **MRT:** Raffles Place **WHEN/PRICE:** Feb 14 (from 5.30pm): Ti Amo menu, \$248++ a person (add \$60++ a person for wine pairing); Sunset menu, \$128++ a person (add \$45++ for wine pairing); Romantic Terrace Experience, \$198++ a couple **TEL:** 6509-1488 **INFO:** E-mail info@zafferano.sg

Spice It Up At Blue Jasmine

Blue Jasmine's light bites include pan-seared salmon cubes with a spicy, crispy salad of deep-fried rose petals. Savour mains such as roasted duck breast in red curry and the signature holy basil krapao with squid. Finish with a trio of desserts. Diners get a complimentary duo of chocolate pralines. **WHERE:** Level 5 Park Hotel Farrer Park, 10 Farrer Park Station Road

MRT: Farrer Park **WHEN:** Feb 14, 11.30am lunch (a la carte only), 6pm dinner (set only) **PRICE:** Set: \$78++ a couple **TEL:** 6824-8851 **INFO:** E-mail hello@bluejasmine.com.sg

WINE EVENT

The Cuisine Of Chef Lino Sauro With Frescobaldi Wines

The six-course menu includes raw shrimp (ama ebi), poached mackerel and housemade chitarra spaghetti. Featured wines include Pomino Bianco 2017 and Nipozzano Chianti Rufina Riserva 2014. **WHERE:** Gattopardo Ristorante di Mare, 34 Tras Street **MRT:** Tanjong Pagar **WHEN:** Feb 21, 7pm **PRICE:** \$161++ a person (\$128.80++ for HSBC cardholders) **TEL:** 6319-4038 **INFO:** E-mail gustoitaliano@sph.com.sg

FoodPicks

Wong Ah Yoke Food Critic recommends

SOUP PENCAI

If you have tried heating up your takeaway pencei for Chinese New Year on the stove, you might have found that the bottom-most layer has a tendency to get burnt.

Some restaurants put a metal disc or a piece of woven rattan beneath the food to prevent this and it helps.

Prima Tower Revolving Restaurant, however, does not have this problem because its version, called Fortune Pot In Peking Style, comes with a soup instead of the thick brown sauce of most pencei. Still, I'd suggest you use low to medium heat to prevent the food from being overcooked.

You get the premium ingredients typical of a Chinese New Year pencei, including sea cucumber, fish maw, abalone, dried oyster, prawns and mushrooms. There are roast pork and pig's tendon too.

The broth is light and flavourful and you can eat the pot on its own without rice - which is great if you're on a low-carbohydrate diet.

The Fortune Pot comes in two sizes - \$368 for six people and \$498 for 10 people. You need to order it at least two days in advance for both dine-in and takeaway.

WHERE: Prima Tower Revolving Restaurant, 201 Keppel Road **MRT:** HarbourFront **WHEN:** Till Feb 19, 11am to 2.30pm, 6.30 to 10.30pm **TEL:** 6272-8822

PHOTOS: GOODWOOD PARK HOTEL, PRIMA TOWER REVOLVING RESTAURANT, WONG AH YOKE



WESTERN PUDDING WITH A CHINESE TOUCH

Desserts in Chinese restaurants are usually standard items such as mango pudding and almond cream. But not at Empress, the restaurant in the Asian Civilisations Museum. Desserts here are a highlight for me.

The one not to miss is Sticky Date & Longan Pudding (\$14), a popular Western pudding given a Chinese touch. The pudding is moist and rich, with bits of dried longan in it for added texture. It comes with a scoop of vanilla ice cream and gula melaka butterscotch, which has deeper flavours than ordinary sugar.

I don't have a sweet tooth, but this, I am happy to eat any time.

WHERE: Empress, 01-03 Asian Civilisations Museum, 1 Empress Place **MRT:** Raffles Place **OPEN:** 11.30am to 3pm (weekdays), 11am to 4pm (weekends), 6 to 10pm daily **TEL:** 6776-0777



HAWKER DEGUSTATION

Riding on Singapore's bicentennial celebrations this year, Goodwood Park Hotel has come up with a degustation menu at its Coffee Lounge showcasing local hawker dishes. Five dishes are selected from the cafe's a la carte menu to represent the nation's heritage hawker fare, and served course by course in smaller servings than a la carte versions.

The meal starts with two sticks of chicken satay served with ketupat and raw onion and cucumber. Next is rojak that comprises turnip, pineapple, cucumber, tau pok, kangkong, beansprouts and peanut; followed by Hainanese chicken rice and laksa. Dessert is bubur pulut hitam.

My favourites are the rojak and chicken rice. The laksa is a little sweet for my liking and there are no cockles, which is a deal-breaker for some people.

Priced at \$40 a person, the Singapore Commemoration Local



Degustation Menu would work for those who want to eat all their favourite food at one sitting. It is great too as a treat for friends visiting from overseas.

WHERE: Coffee Lounge, Goodwood Park Hotel, 22 Scotts Road **MRT:** Orchard **WHEN:** Till April 30, noon to 2.30pm, 6 to 10.30pm **TEL:** 6730-1746

新年快乐

Share the joy of an authentic Teochew feast this reunion dinner

Auspicious Set Menus starting from \$638* (10 persons)

Please take note of our restaurant hours during CNY:
 4 Feb 2019 - Open for Reunion Dinner only
 5 Feb 2019 - Closed
 6 Feb 2019 - Open

Or celebrate at home with our special Takeaway Menus

Reservation Hotline 6533 5300 www.teochewhungkeng.com.sg

28 North Canal Road, Poh Heng Building (opposite Hong Lim Park), Singapore 059284. *No service charge. Subject to T&T charges and GST.

ARTS

BOOKS

Book Launch: They Told Us To Move: Dakota-Cassia

Dakota Crescent was one of Singapore's oldest public housing estates. In 2016, its residents were relocated to make way for redevelopment. This book tells the story of relocation through the eyes of Dakota residents, volunteers and academics.

WHERE: library@harbourfront, 03-05 VivoCity, 1 Harbourfront Walk
MRT: HarbourFront
WHEN: Feb 23, 2 - 3.30pm
ADMISSION: Free **INFO:** To register, go to bit.ly/2FLA36g-conversations-on-relocation

CONCERTS

Enchanting Violin Sonatas Of The Romantic Era

Into their fourth year of collaboration, violinist Lee Shi Mei and pianist Lim Yan will perform some familiar favourites as well as rare gems of the repertoire, including compositions by Ludwig van Beethoven, Johannes Brahms, Cesar Franck, Frederick Delius and Erich Korngold.

WHERE: Esplanade Concourse, 1 Esplanade Drive **MRT:** Esplanade/ City Hall **WHEN:** Tomorrow, 4.30, 5.30 & 6.30pm **ADMISSION:** Free **INFO:** esplanade.com

La Cenerentola By Rossini

Under the direction of Edith Podesta, OperaLab returns with a light-hearted fully staged opera production of Rossini's La Cenerentola, which follows its successful presentation of Mozart's Così Fan Tutte last March.

WHERE: Esplanade Concourse, 1 Esplanade Drive **MRT:** Esplanade/ City Hall **WHEN:** Sun & Feb 10, 4.30pm **ADMISSION:** Free **INFO:** esplanade.com

The Sweet Sounds Of West Java

Gamelan Asmaradana will be featuring its Sundanese gamelan (traditional instrumental group) ensemble, Degung Singalagena, which is directed by kendang (double-headed drums) maestro Tatang Sofyan. The repertoire includes traditional pieces as well as modern folk standards that are accompanied by Sundanese tembang (classical vocal music) or poetry.

WHERE: Esplanade Outdoor Theatre, 1 Esplanade Drive **MRT:** Esplanade/ City Hall **WHEN:** Mon, 6.45, 8 & 9.15pm **ADMISSION:** Free **INFO:** esplanade.com

The Bolling Suites

Pianist Kseniia Vokhmianina and friends will present the suites by French composer and jazz pianist Claude Bolling, which mix styles to create whimsical, elegant works.

WHERE: Esplanade Concourse, 1 Esplanade Drive **MRT:** Esplanade/ City Hall **WHEN:** Feb 5, 5.30 & 6.30pm **ADMISSION:** Free **INFO:** esplanade.com

Classically Malay

Orkestra Sri Temasek presents a repertoire of classical music with a traditional Malay twist. Popular classical works such as Pachelbel's Canon In D, Monti's Czardas and Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 will be performed with instruments such as the accordion, mandolin and rebana.

WHERE: Esplanade Outdoor Theatre, 1 Esplanade Drive **MRT:** Esplanade/ City Hall **WHEN:** Tue, 7.15, 8.15 & 9.15pm **ADMISSION:** Free **INFO:** esplanade.com

DANCE

ICN 2019 – Arunika: A Musical

Inspired by one of the darkest untold stories in Indonesian history, ICN Cultural Production presents a musical depicting the era when slavery was widespread throughout the region.

WHERE: Drama Centre Theatre, Level 3 National Library Building, 100 Victoria Street **MRT:** City Hall/ Bugis **WHEN:** Feb 16, 2.30 & 7.30pm **ADMISSION:** \$18 - \$24, go to show.icnmusical.com

EXHIBITIONS (MUSEUM)

DigiMuse Presents

Launched in conjunction with Singapore Art Week 2019, this edition of DigiMuse Presents explores the coming together of art, culture and technology through the use of new creative tools. The featured art installations utilise technology such as immersive reality, robotics, artificial intelligence, 3D printing, social media and more.

WHERE: National Museum of Singapore, 93 Stamford Road **MRT:** Bras Basah/ D'Almeida

Arts Picks

Akshita Nanda Arts Correspondent recommends



THE TIGER WHO CAME TO TEA

This musical is based on a beloved children's book by Judith Kerr in which a hungry tiger (played by Thomas O'Connell) comes to tea with Sophie (Abbey Norman) and her mother (Stephanie Summers, all left). Recommended for families with children aged three and older, this play is part of KidsFest! Singapore 2019, a festival of children's theatre produced by ABA Productions.

WHERE: Drama Centre Theatre, National Library Building, Level 3, 100 Victoria Street **MRT:** Bugis **WHEN:** Today, 5pm; tomorrow and Sunday, 10am, noon and 3pm **ADMISSION:** \$42 to \$62 from Sistic (call 6348-5555 or go to sistic.com.sg) **INFO:** www.kidsfest.com.sg

ART SKINS ON MONUMENTS: 7 STORIES FROM 700 YEARS

This is the biggest facade light show in Singapore, with multimedia projected onto the walls of the National Gallery Singapore, The Arts House, Asian Civilisations Museum, and Victoria Theatre and Concert Hall.

As part of the bicentennial edition of the Light To Night Festival, the projections are inspired by Singapore's history. Stories of the coolies and the Chettiar moneylenders who worked along the Singapore River are featured in Stronghearts at The Arts House, while Sayang Di Sayang (right) at the Padang Atrium of the National Gallery Singapore is based on the life of late musician Zubir Said, who composed the National Anthem.

WHERE: Civic District **MRT:** City Hall/ Raffles Place **WHEN:** Until Feb 24; Sundays to Thursdays, 8 to 10pm; Fridays and Saturdays, 8pm to midnight **ADMISSION:** Free **INFO:** lighttonight.sg



PHOTOS: KHALID BABA, NATIONAL GALLERY SINGAPORE, ROBERT DAY, TIMOTHY DAVID



ARTWALK LITTLE INDIA 2019

This is the closing weekend of the annual Artwalk Little India, which transforms the Little India precinct into a multi-disciplinary art project featuring wall murals, dance and music performances, workshops and other events.

WHERE: Little India. Start from

Little India, Farrer Park or Jalan Besar MRT stations **WHEN:** Today and tomorrow **ADMISSION/INFO:** Walking trails are free. Go to artwalklittleindia.sg to download brochure and maps and for details of free and ticketed events around the precinct



ORTHODOX: A TWO-PART EXHIBITION

Twelve artists showcase works inspired by their personal faiths or traditional beliefs in this exhibition hosted at Coda Culture and Your Mother Gallery.

Orthodox is presented by new platform The Right Belief, which is founded by Singaporean artist Nicole Phua (above) and Indonesian artist Liza Markus, and supported by Singapore Art Week.

WHERE: Your Mother Gallery, 91 Hindoo Road **MRT:** Jalan Besar **WHEN:** Today and tomorrow, noon to 8pm **ADMISSION:** Free **INFO:** therightbelief.weebly.com

WHERE: Coda Culture, 05-05 Golden Mile Complex, 5001 Beach Road **MRT:** Lavender/ Nicoll Highway **WHEN:** Today to Sunday, noon to 8.30pm **ADMISSION:** Free **INFO:** therightbelief.weebly.com

WHEN: Till Feb 17, 10am - 7pm
ADMISSION: Free
INFO: nationalmuseum.sg

Raffles In South-east Asia: Revisiting The Scholar And Statesman

Sir Stamford Raffles was a British official with the East India Company who is known for establishing Singapore as a modern British port. He has been viewed as a scholarly expert on the region, a progressive reformer, a committed imperialist and even a plagiariser. This exhibition presents a complex, multi-layered picture of Raffles while showcasing the rich artistic and cultural heritage of Java and the Malay world. The show is a collaboration between the British Museum and the Asian Civilisations Museum.

WHERE: Asian Civilisations Museum, 1 Empress Place **MRT:** Raffles Place **WHEN:** Today - April 28, 10am - 7pm daily (Fridays till 9pm) **ADMISSION:** Singaporeans & permanent residents: \$12 (free for

students & seniors); foreign residents & tourists: \$20 (\$15 for students & seniors) **TEL:** 6332-7798 **INFO:** acm.org.sg

EXHIBITIONS (GALLERIES)

I Am You: Elodie Chandernagor

Presented by UltraSuperNew Gallery, this photographic exhibition by French artist Elodie Chandernagor challenges the illusion of self and explores the human body. **WHERE:** 109 Rowell Road **MRT:** Jalan Besar **WHEN:** Feb 15 - March 15, 11am - 7pm **ADMISSION:** Free **INFO:** https://bit.ly/2CW5tS3

Duo Exhibition: Mauro Corda & Lee Jung Woong

Opera Gallery's dual exhibition showcases realism and imagination when East meets West and the harmonious blend of cultures by exhibiting two contrasting aesthetics. **WHERE:** Opera Gallery, 02-16 Ion Orchard, 2 Orchard Turn

MRT: Orchard **WHEN:** Feb 22 - March 9, 11am - 8pm (Mon - Fri), 10am - 8pm (Sat & Sun) **ADMISSION:** Free **TEL:** 6735-2618 **INFO:** E-mail spore@operagallery.com

EXHIBITIONS (SHOWS)

Inter Airport South East Asia 2019

This international exhibition for airport equipment, technology, and design and services aims to deliver a vision of building better airports in South-east Asia.

WHERE: Hall 4A Singapore Expo, 1 Expo Drive **MRT:** Expo **WHEN:** Feb 27 & 28 (10am - 5pm), March 1 (10am - 4pm) **ADMISSION:** Free, register at rpg.infosalons.com.au/interairport19si **INFO:** E-mail info@interairport-southeastasia.com

THEATRE

Off Centre

The Necessary Stage's Off Centre

returns 26 years after its premiere in 1993. Written by Haresh Sharma and directed by Alvin Tan, it is a landmark play in the history of Singapore theatre, best remembered for presenting an honest and unflinching look at mental illness and the stigma surrounding it. It follows the unlikely friendship between Saloma and Vinod and traces their journeys as they deal with their personal conflicts as well as social prejudices on mental health.

WHERE: Victoria Theatre, 9 Empress Place **MRT:** Raffles Place **WHEN:** Feb 7 - 10, 13 - 17 (Wed - Sat, 8pm; Sat & Sun 3pm) **ADMISSION:** \$36 - \$45, 20 per cent discount for students, full-time national servicemen & seniors. Go to www.sistic.com.sg or call 6348-5555 **TEL:** 6440-8115 **INFO:** E-mail admin@necessary.org

Fun With Hand Puppets

Get insights into the art of

manipulating hand puppets with instructors from The Finger Players and see how these puppets come alive when they are in your hands. No experience is needed.

WHERE: Esplanade Forecourt Garden (near Jubilee Bridge), 1 Esplanade Drive **MRT:** Esplanade/ City Hall **WHEN:** Feb 15 & 16, 5.30 & 6.30pm **ADMISSION:** Free **INFO:** esplanade.com

Checkpoint Theatre Presents: Still Life

What happens when an artist picks up her paintbrush after a long hiatus? Does the body still remember what has been lived? Or are the senses dulled by time, the joints fused with experience? Dana Lam rediscovers and reclaims her journey from the 1950s through her twin first loves: writing and painting. **WHERE:** 72-13 Mohamed Sultan Road **MRT:** Fort Canning **WHEN:** Feb 28 - March 10 (Thu - Sat, 8pm; Sat & Sun 3pm) **ADMISSION:** \$45 (go to www.sistic.com.sg or call 6348-5555)

FILMS

The Killing Of A Sacred Deer (2018, M18)
This movie reunites director Yorgos Lanthimos with The Lobster star Colin Farrell, who plays Steven, a charismatic surgeon forced to make an unthinkable sacrifice after his life starts to fall apart and the behaviour of a teenage boy he has taken under his wing turns sinister. Also stars Nicole Kidman and Alicia Silverstone.
WHERE: The Projector, Level 5 Golden Mile Tower, 6001 Beach Road
MRT: Nicoll Highway
WHEN: Tomorrow, 4.30pm; Sun 2.45pm; Tue, 7.40pm (Blue Room)
ADMISSION: \$13.50 (standard), \$11.50 (concession) **INFO:** theprojector.sg

Early Summer (1951, PG)
Arguably the earliest benchmark of subtle feminine power in 1950s Japan, director Yasujiro Ozu's quietly controversial Early Summer portrays a young woman of the post-war era who is promised in an arranged marriage. Caught between her family's archaic traditions and the rapidly westernising society, she is forced to choose between honourable duty and her own path in life. Stars Setsuko Hara.
WHERE: The Projector, Level 5 Golden Mile Tower, 6001 Beach Road
MRT: Nicoll Highway
WHEN: Tomorrow, 8pm; Feb 10, 4.30pm (Redrum) **ADMISSION:** \$13.50 (standard), \$11.50 (concession) **INFO:** theprojector.sg

Sorry To Bother You (2018, R21)
In an alternate present-day version of Oakland, telemarketeer Cassius Green (Lakeith Stanfield) discovers a magical key to professional success, which propels him into a macabre universe of "powercalling" that leads to material glory. Also stars Tessa Thompson and Armie Hammer.
WHERE: The Projector, Level 5 Golden Mile Tower, 6001 Beach Road
MRT: Nicoll Highway
WHEN: Tomorrow, 8.20pm; Sun, 8pm; Wed, 5.10pm (Blue Room)
ADMISSION: \$13.50 (standard), \$11.50 (concession) **INFO:** theprojector.sg

Spider-Man: Into The Spider-Verse (2018, PG)
Phil Lord and Christopher Miller, the creative minds behind The Lego Movie and 21 Jump Street, bring their unique talents to a fresh vision of the Spider-Man universe, with a ground-breaking visual style. Spider-Man: Into The Spider-Verse introduces Brooklyn teen Miles Morales and the limitless possibilities of the Spider-Verse, where more than one person can wear the mask.
WHERE: The Projector, Level 5 Golden Mile Tower, 6001 Beach Road
MRT: Nicoll Highway **WHEN:** Sun, 2pm (Green Room) **ADMISSION:** \$13.50 (standard), \$11.50 (concession) **INFO:** theprojector.sg

They Shall Not Grow Old (2018, PG13)
Combining state-of-the-art technology and Academy Award-winning director Peter Jackson's trademark painstaking methods of restoring and colouring archival war footage, They Shall Not Grow Old takes an extraordinary look at the soldiers and events of the Great War, using film footage captured at the time, presented as the world has never seen. Jackson puts forth an intensely gripping, immersive and authentic experience through the eyes and voices of the British soldiers who lived it.
WHERE: The Projector, Level 5 Golden Mile Tower, 6001 Beach Road
MRT: Nicoll Highway **WHEN:** Wed, 2pm (Redrum) **ADMISSION:** \$13.50 (standard), \$11.50 (concession) **INFO:** theprojector.sg

Cold War (2018, TBA)
Winner of Best Director at last year's Cannes Film Festival, Cold War (in Polish with English subtitles) is set against the backdrop of the 1950s Cold War in Poland, in which two people of different backgrounds and temperaments begin an almost impossible romance.
WHERE: GV Suntec City, 3 Temasek Boulevard **MRT:** Promenade/ Esplanade **WHEN:** Feb 9, 1pm **ADMISSION:** Singapore Film Society membership from \$18 a month **TEL:** 9017-0160 **INFO:** E-mail info@singaporefilmsociety.com

NATURE

What's In My Mangrove?
Join National Parks Board on a guided walk of unique mangrove wetlands located at the border of freshwater (river) and salt water (sea). Singapore used to have large areas of mangroves, but lost most of them to coastal development. Few mangroves are left in Singapore, one of which is at Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve.
WHERE: Sungei Buloh Wetland

John Lui Film Correspondent recommends



CAPERNAUM (NC16)
123 minutes/★★★★☆
The film, nominated for an Oscar in the Best Foreign Language category, opens in court.
Zain (Zain Al Rafeea, above left, with Cedra Izam, who plays Zain's sister), a street kid in a Lebanese slum, is suing his parents for the act of giving birth to him, thus introducing him to a life of misery.
In flashback, he is shown to labour from morning till dusk, delivering gas bottles and hawking drinks. He is denied school because his parents have sold him into slavery in exchange for rent and food for his siblings.
Zain snaps, causing him to run away to an underworld of oddballs, human traffickers, Syrian refugees and overstayers like the Ethiopian cleaning woman, Rahil (Yordanos Shiferaw).
Lebanese film-maker Nadine Labaki has a knack for communicating the misery of life at the bottom without falling into the usual artistic traps of romanticisation (also known as "poverty porn") or its opposite, shock-value gruesomeness.
WHERE: The Projector, Level 5 Golden Mile Tower, 6001 Beach Road **MRT:** Nicoll Highway
WHEN: Opens tomorrow **ADMISSION:** \$13.50 **INFO:** theprojector.sg

PHOTOS:
GOLDEN VILLAGE,
SONY PICTURES
CLASSICS,
ANTICIPATE
PICTURES



HAVE A NICE DAY (PG13)
75 minutes/★★★★☆
A bag containing one million yuan (\$\$204,000) is at the centre of a web involving a wannabe gangster, his boss, a pork seller-turned-assassin and a motley crew of small-time business people with big dreams.
In this blackly comic social satire, winner of the Best Animation prize at last year's Golden Horse Awards, Nanjing-based animator and director Liu Jian depicts a city without pity, shown not just in the things the characters do and say, but also in how it looks.
The backdrop is a wasteland, a dystopia reeking of neglect and a place left behind by China's economic miracle.
WHERE: The Projector, Level 5 Golden Mile Tower, 6001 Beach Road **MRT:** Nicoll Highway
WHEN: Opens tomorrow
ADMISSION: \$13.50 **INFO:** theprojector.sg

Reserve, 301 Neo Tiew Crescent (meet at information counter, visitor centre, Kranji Way entrance)
MRT: Kranji **WHEN:** Feb 9, 9.30 - 11am
ADMISSION: Free, sign up at nparks.gov.sg **TEL:** 6794-1401
INFO: E-mail nparks_sbwr@nparks.gov.sg

Coney Island-Lorong Halus Ramble
From Punggol MRT station, this tour conducted by Nature Society (Singapore) will take participants aged 12 and older to explore Coney Island. The tour will end at Lorong Halus.
WHERE/MRT: Meet at Pandian (8am) at Punggol MRT station **WHEN:** Feb 16, 8am - 1pm **ADMISSION:** Free, for Nature Society (Singapore) members; go to nss.org.sg for membership details

TOURS

Istana Open House
Visit the Istana and make it a memorable one with a 45-minute guided tour led by the Preservation of Sites and Monuments division's volunteer guides. Hear interesting stories about this well-loved national monument, which has witnessed Singapore's colonial past, tumultuous years and independence in 1965. Visit the stately function rooms, which have welcomed royalty, presidents and other VIPs throughout its history. Tour

participants will receive a special Istana souvenir brochure. All proceeds collected from the tours will go to Community Chest.
WHERE: Istana, Orchard Road
MRT: Dhoby Ghaut **WHEN:** Wed, 9am - 3pm **ADMISSION:** Singapore citizens & permanent residents: \$4 (\$12 for a family of four); foreigners: \$10 (\$30 for a family of four); children four - 12 years old: \$2 (free for those up to three years old)
INFO: www.nhb.gov.sg

CONTEST

Snap, Post & Win With Cold Stone Creamery
To take part in ice cream chain Cold Stone Creamery's contest, take a photo at any of Cold Stone Creamery's outlets at VivoCity, Waterway Point or Orchard Central, post it on Instagram with the hashtag #ColdStoneCharacterCakes and tag @ColdStoneCreamerySG and friends whom you want to share the prizes with. The photo with the most "likes" each week will be selected to win a pair of in-season passes to DreamWorks Animation's upcoming feature film, How To Train Your Dragon: The Hidden World. All submissions will be entered into the final round and the photo with the most "likes" will win the grand prize - one year of free ice cream.
WHERE (MRT): Cold Stone Creamery outlets at VivoCity (HarbourFront), Waterway Point (Punggol) &

Orchard Central (Somerset)
WHEN: Closing date is Feb 28
ADMISSION: Free
INFO: coldstonecreamery.com.sg

KIDS

Terrific Tales: Oink & Squeak!
Usher in the Year Of The Pig with some Oink & Squeak stories. The Storytelling Centre revisits classics such as the three little pigs who outwit the big, bad wolf, the old woman whose pig refused to jump over a stile and a piglet whose ambition was to become king. Also, squeak along with a mouse family as they go in search of the ideal husband for their little mouse. There will also be a simple craft activity.
WHERE: The Artground at Goodman Arts Centre, 90 Goodman Road
MRT: Mountbatten **WHEN:** Sun & Feb 10, 17 & 24 (11.30am - 12.15pm)
ADMISSION: \$10 for a parent-and-child pair
INFO: storytellingcentrelimited.com

LAST CALL

Yajnaseni - The Eternal Flame
Does dharma take priority over emotions? This is a question that Draupadi, heroine of the Hindu epic Mahabharata, silently faced. Yajnaseni gives voice to this private struggle, exploring the

shades of grey between what is right and wrong.
WHERE: Esplanade Theatre Studio, 1 Esplanade Drive **MRT:** Esplanade/ City Hall **WHEN:** Today & tomorrow, 8pm **ADMISSION:** \$35 (\$25 for students & seniors)
INFO: www.esplanade.com

Chinatown Chinese New Year Festive Market Walk
Led by a Chinatown resident and guide, this walk is a fun combination of history, sightseeing and street art, as well as stories and customs of Chinese New Year. There will be sampling of Chinese New Year goodies.
WHERE/MRT: Meet at Chinatown MRT station **WHEN:** Today & tomorrow, 6 - 8pm
ADMISSION: \$48 a person
TEL: 8749-4007
INFO: everydaytourcompany.com

Night Heritage Tour
Did you know that the history of Fort Canning dates back to the 14th century? In this night tour held in conjunction with the Festival at the Fort @ i Light 2019, participants will hear the stories and legends that shroud the Forbidden Hill.
WHERE: Raffles House, Raffles Terrace, Fort Canning **MRT:** Fort Canning **WHEN:** Today, 7 - 8.30pm
ADMISSION: Free, register at nparks.gov.sg **INFO:** E-mail jason_ool@nparks.gov.sg

Community spirit on show at Singapore Art Week: NAC

Toh Wen Li

Singapore Art Week (SAW) will return for its eighth edition from Jan 11 to 19 next year, the National Arts Council (NAC) announced on Wednesday, as it noted the strong show of community spirit this year after the sudden cancellation of Art Stage Singapore – previously one of the art week’s main highlights.

SAW, an annual celebration of the visual arts, is a joint initiative by the NAC, Singapore Tourism Board and Singapore Economic Development Board. It ran from Jan 19 to 27 this year with more than 100 programmes across the island.

Events ranged from the Light To Night Festival at the Civic District to Artwalk Little India. Art After Dark, held at Gillman Barracks on Jan 25, drew thousands of visitors to the arts enclave off Alexandra Road.

One conspicuous absence was Art Stage Singapore, the major contemporary art fair on the island. It was cancelled nine days before its public opening slated for Jan 25, in what would have been its ninth edition.

Founder and president Lorenzo Rudolf cited poor sales and “unequal competition”.

He was referring to a new boutique art fair at Gillman Barracks called S.E.A. Focus, which featured a total of 26 Singapore and international galleries from Jan 23 to 27 – which includes the vernissage or preview date.

The fair, an initiative of STPI – Creative Workshop & Gallery, attracted more than 10,500 visitors over the five days. In comparison, Art Stage Singapore drew more than 26,500 visitors over four days last year, including the VIP preview and vernissage, which is often when deals are made.

STPI’s executive director Emi Eu described the response to S.E.A. Focus as “really overwhelmingly positive... (with) good, healthy sales”.

Some galleries which participated told The Straits Times they were encouraged by the response.

Richard Koh Fine Art, one of the galleries exhibiting at S.E.A. Focus, sold all seven works by artist Faris Nakamura, which it presented at the fair.

Singapore-based Art Porters Gallery’s booth was almost sold out, said its co-founder Guillaume Levy-Lambert. It presented art by young Singapore artists Jamie Teo, whose works cost between \$880 and \$4,950 each, and Priyagetha Dia, who had two works priced at about \$10,000 each.

Mr Levy-Lambert told The Straits Times: “It was a quality crowd, not a ‘quantity crowd’. In the past, we’ve often tended to show artworks from quite a large number of artists (around five). This time, having only two on the booth gave us the time to speak in-depth about the works.”

Then, there was The ARTery, a pop-up fair organised by non-profit group Art Outreach in the wake of Art Stage’s cancellation. Held at the Marina Bay Sands Expo & Convention Centre, it featured 14 Singapore and international galleries which were “stranded” after the sudden news of the cancellation.

While galleries that The Straits Times spoke to acknowledged that the crowd was not huge, they were heartened by the groundswell of support leading up to the fair.

London- and Hong Kong-based gallery Tanya Baxter Contemporary sold works by painters Frank Auerbach and Pierre-Auguste Renoir, but declined to reveal sales figures.

Its owner and director, Ms Tanya Baxter, said: “We are happy. We could have done more... (but) considering five days before there was no art fair (Art Stage Singapore), there was enough business done.”

NAC was unable to reveal visitorship figures for The ARTery by press time.

Ms Linda de Mello, NAC’s director for sector development (visual arts), said: “We are delighted that there have been so many ground-up collaborations where art practitioners from different disciplines came together to push creative boundaries to engage art lovers and new audiences.

“Importantly, the community came together in friendship and goodwill and this augurs well for the visual-arts ecosystem.”



Westlife (comprising, from left, Kian Egan, Nicky Byrne, Mark Feehily and Shane Filan) are planning an Asia tour this year. PHOTO: UNIVERSAL MUSIC SINGAPORE

Westlife 2.0 want to show their love

The Irish boyband are marking their 20th anniversary with a new album and a tour

Anjali Raguraman

Irish group Westlife are celebrating the 20th anniversary of their formation with a new album and a tour – they are definitely not just coasting along.

After keeping a low profile for the past six years, the quartet – made up of Nicky Byrne, 40; Kian Egan, 38; Mark Feehily, 38; and Shane Filan, 39 – plan to come back with a bang. Former member Brian McFadden, who left the group in 2004 to pursue a solo career, is not part of the reunion.

“We call this Westlife 2.0 because we want everything that we do to be better than the last time,” Egan tells The Straits Times on Wednesday at The Fullerton Hotel.

They were sporting jackets, jeans and suede shoes, looking fresh despite landing at 6am earlier that same day.

The boyband, who were at the peak of their popularity in the

2000s, were in Singapore as part of a promotional tour following the release of their first single in eight years, Hello My Love.

They also held a question-and-answer session with fans yesterday at Aura Sky Lounge on the roof of the National Gallery Singapore.

The video for the song, which was co-written by pop star Ed Sheeran and produced by frequent Westlife collaborator Steve Mac, has already garnered more than seven million views on YouTube.

“I think we’re in a lucky position because we’ve not just come back with a reunion and an average song. We have a superstar like Ed Sheeran involved,” says Byrne.

It is the first of three new songs that Sheeran co-wrote with Mac for the group.

Filan says they were penned about six months after the two collaborated on Sheeran’s 2017 blockbuster hit, Shape Of You.

“One day, they said, ‘Let’s write a Westlife song’ and, at that point, we hadn’t even talked about getting back together yet,” he says.

Months later, when a reunion was being discussed, Westlife’s manager got them into Mac’s studio to listen to the songs.

“It was one of those days you’ll never forget – just like the first time

going in and hearing Flying Without Wings or Swear It Again – we had that feeling in our bellies,” Filan recalls.

With its “fresh and new” sound, the upbeat Hello My Love was a shoo-in for the first single, even though the group are better known for ballads such as If I Let You Go and My Love.

“Everyone was probably expecting the big ballad because that’s what we were famous for doing, but that’s one of the main reasons it’s good, because it shocked people a little bit,” adds Egan.

The reaction to the song has been encouraging.

“I saw something on Twitter which said 20 years later, Westlife are no longer the band people like in secret,” notes Byrne. “It felt good and there’s more of that to come.”

Besides the three songs, Feehily says the group are about halfway through recording their new album.

“We’re also recording and writing some songs. We don’t know the exact date the album will be finished, but we’re going full steam ahead with making it,” he says.

More than anything, the group wanted to mount a comeback because they missed music.

“We went back to normal life, like taking our kids to school, taking the

bins out on Friday and it was good to go and be out of the bubble of Westlife,” says Egan. “Because now, when we come back, we feel so energised and excited about it.”

While the group have announced The Twenty Tour, which kicks off in May and in which they will tour Europe, they are also planning an Asia tour – including a Singapore stop.

“We’re just about to announce a whole Asia tour quite soon, but we will definitely be in Singapore for a concert this year,” says Filan.

“All the teenagers in Singapore who were our fans and probably banged on the windows at the airport when we landed are all grown up.

“So, there’s excitement to come back and do the show and sing the songs again to those people who probably have their own children now,” says Byrne.

That said, the band admit they have some work to do before they hit the road again.

When asked if they still remember the choreography for their songs, Feehily quips: “We didn’t even remember it the first time around.”

Filan, on the other hand, is confident they will take to it “like a duck to water”.

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Comics

BABY BLUES



GARFIELD



Free to air

CHANNEL 5

AM
6.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 15 (HD) (PG) (V)
6.45 Just For Laughs Gags 17 (V)
7.00 First Look Asia (Simulcast From CNA) (CA)
9.00 The Dr Oz Show 10 (HD) (IE)
10.00 Films & Stars (PG) (V)
10.30 Everyday Gourmet 3 (HD) (IE)
11.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (HD) (PG) (V)
PM
12.00 Martha Bakes 7 (HD) (IE)
12.30 Gordon Ramsay's Ultimate Cookery Course (IE)
1.00 Wheel Of Fortune 36 (HD) (CC) (V)
1.30 Kin (PG) (CC) (D)
2.00 Phua Chu Kang Pte Ltd 4 (SC)
2.30 Talking Point Specials (CA)
3.00 The Dr Oz Show 10 (HD) (PG) (IE)
4.00 Make You Laugh Out Loud 3 (PG) (V)
4.30 Survivor 36 (PG) (V)
5.30 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (HD) (PG) (V)
6.30 Just For Laughs Gags 18 (V)
6.45 The Peanuts Movie (CC) (M)
8.30 Kin (PG) (CC) (D)
9.00 News 5 (HD)
9.30 Why It Matters (HD) (CC) (CA)
10.00 The Man From U.N.C.L.E. (PG) (CC) (M)
AM
12.10 Kin (PG) (CC) (D)
12.40 Code Of Law 4 (PG13) (D)
1.40 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (V)
2.30 Hawaii Five-O 7 (PG13) (D)
3.20 The Dr Oz Show 9 (HD) (PG13) (IE)
4.10 Martha Bakes 7 (IE)
4.40 Gordon Ramsay's Ultimate Cookery Course (IE)
5.10 The Dr Oz Show 10 (PG) (IE)

CHANNEL 8

AM
6.00 X Warrior – International PK Matches (V)
7.30 Hello Singapore Highlights (HD) (CA)
8.00 Walk With Me (PG) (CC) (D)
9.00 Morning Express (HD) (News)
9.30 Jalan Jalan (PG) (CC) (D)
10.00 Focus (CC) (CA)

10.30 The Fairy Couple (Chinese Opera)
11.30 How Are You? (PG) (CC) (D)
PM
12.30 JML Home Shopping (Infomercial)
1.00 News 8 At One (HD)
1.30 118 (PG) (CC) (D)
2.00 Cookie Master (SC)
2.30 The Precedents (PG) (D)
3.30 Golden Age Talentime (HD) (CC) (V)
4.30 Taste Of Life (PG) (D)
5.30 When Duty Calls (PG) (CC) (D)
6.30 Hello Singapore (HD) (News)
7.30 Jalan Jalan (PG) (CC) (D)
8.00 Body SOS 7 (CC) (V)
8.30 New Year, Old Taste (CC) (IE)
9.00 Walk With Me (PG) (CC) (D)
10.00 News Tonight (HD)
10.30 Food And Beverage Investigators 8 (IE)
11.00 Princess Agents (PG) (CC) (D)
AM
12.00 The Princess Weiyong (PG) (D)
1.00 Lady Investigators (D)
2.00 A Time To Dance (D)
4.00 A Place Called Home (PG) (D)

CHANNEL U

PM
3.00 Heroes Of Remix (V)
4.30 King Of The Kitchens (IE)
5.00 Cheongdamdong Scandal (PG) (CC) (D)
6.00 The Girl Who Sees Smells (PG) (CC) (D)
7.00 My Father Is Strange (PG) (CC) (D)
9.00 Hello Taiwan (IE)
10.00 Brother's Keeper 2 (PG13) (CC) (D)
11.00 News Tonight
11.30 Hello Taiwan (IE)
AM
12.30 My Father Is Strange (PG) (CC) (D)
2.30 Close

CNA

AM
6.00 Singapore Tonight
7.00 First Look Asia
9.00 Asia Business First
10.02 Champions For Change
11.00 News Now
PM
1.02 Insight
2.00 News Now
4.02 Champions For Change
5.00 News Now
7.02 Every Woman (CC)

7.30 A Beautiful World
8.00 Primetime Asia
9.02 Conversation With (CC)
9.30 The Making Of Singapore On Film (CC)
10.00 Singapore Tonight
11.02 Insight
AM
12.00 News Now
12.30 Asia Business First Weekend
1.02 Conversation With
1.30 The Making Of Singapore On Film (CC)
2.00 News Now
2.30 Correspondents' Diary
3.02 Champions For Change
4.00 News Now
4.30 Correspondents' Diary
5.02 Conversation With
5.30 The Making Of Singapore On Film (CC)
Programmes may be pre-empted by breaking news

VASANTHAM

PM
3.00 Super Samayal 4 (IE)
3.30 Aasai Aasaiya – Cooking for Love (IE)
4.00 Priyasakhi (D)
4.30 Thedal – Star Search 2016 (HD) (V)
5.30 Mighty Raju Animation Series (S)
6.00 Suryaputhri 2 (Malayalam) (D)
7.00 Oru Oorilae (CC) (S)
7.30 Janani D/O Madhavan (CC) (S)
8.00 Uyire (PG) (CC) (D)
8.30 Tamil Seithi (News)
9.00 Indian Beat 9 (HD) (CC) (IE)
9.30 Kalamellam Kadhavazhga (PG) (CC) (M)
AM
12.30 Tamil Seithi (News) (R)
1.00 Close

OKTO

AM
9.00 Tip The Mouse (P)
9.30 Teddies (P)
10.00 Andy's Prehistoric Adventures (P)
10.30 Sesame Street (HD) (P)
11.00 Mouk (P)
11.30 Ready Jet Go! (P)
PM
12.00 Hiccup & Sneeze (P)
12.30 Teddies (P)
1.00 Coconut The Little Dragon (P)
1.30 Tip The Mouse (P)
2.00 Andy's Prehistoric Adventures (P)
2.30 Sesame Street (HD) (P)

3.00 Mouk (P)
3.30 Ready Jet Go! (P)
4.00 Odd Squad (HD) (S)
4.30 Captain Flinn And The Pirate Dinosaurs (S)
5.00 Littlest Pet Shop (S)
5.30 Marcus Level (HD) (S)
6.00 OddBods (S)
6.30 The Diary Of Amos Lee (S)
7.00 My Little Pony: Friendship Is Magic (HD) (CC) (S)
7.30 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles (HD) (CC) (S)
8.00 Turning Mecard (S)
8.30 Inazuma Eleven (CC) (S)
9.00 Tryfactor (CC) (Sports)
9.30 ONE Championship 2018/19 – ONE Warrior Series 2 (HD) (Sports)
10.00 ONE Championship 2018/19: Immortal Pursuit (Singapore) (PG13) (Sports)
AM
12.40 ONE Championship Weekly (HD) (PG13) (Sports)
1.10 Close

SURIA

PM
4.00 Seindah Takdir Cinta (PG) (D)
5.00 Ti Amo, Sweetheart 100 Hari! (PG) (CC) (D)
6.00 Kem Tahan (IE)
6.30 E.A.T (CC) (IE)
(CC) (D)
8.00 Berita (HD) (News)
8.30 Mamaku Sayang (CC) (S)
9.00 Hands That Shape A Nation (CC) (IE)
9.30 Bisik Pada Langit (PG) (CC) (M)
11.30 Berita (HD) (News)
AM
12.00 Close

C: Children; CA: Current Affairs;
CC: Closed Captions; Cul: Culture;
D: Drama; IE: Info-Ed; M: Movies;
P: Preschool; PG: Parental Guidance;
R: Repeat; S: Schoolkids; SC: Sitcom;
V: Variety

Programme schedules correct at time of printing. Telecast details from Mediacorp, StarHub and Singtel TV. For pay TV updates, go to www.starhub.com/tv or www.singtelv.com.sg

TheStarsSay

Aries (March 21 - April 19)
Take it one step at a time. Things are looking good, but if you try to rush, they will get weird pretty fast.

Taurus (April 20 - May 20)
You run into someone who is enthusiastic about a topic or person. You may get caught up in his energy.

Gemini (May 21 - June 20)
Life is confusing. Your energy might be better spent on artistic pursuits. If you can, just chill.

Cancer (June 21 - July 22)
Your words are easy to misinterpret today, so try to speak plainly and simply.

Leo (July 23 - Aug 22)
Someone needs you, though he is unlikely to say it. Get him to deal with what is holding him back.

Virgo (Aug 23 - Sept 22)
Your desires are out in the open. Others respect your show of ambition and may help you.

Libra (Sept 23 - Oct 22)
You are nostalgic, but it is not the best place for you to be. Get your energy to snap back to the present.

Scorpio (Oct 23 - Nov 21)
It is a great time to start a new arrangement. Whatever you sign today carries extra weight.

Sagittarius (Nov 22 - Dec 21)
Things are pretty weird, but do not freak out. Try to deal with everything as it arises. Put off what you can.

Capricorn (Dec 22 - Jan 19)
You rack up an impressive achievement that makes the competition (and your boss) take notice.

Aquarius (Jan 20 - Feb 18)
Resistance tires you out. You may find your energy is better spent on something more constructive.

Pisces (Feb 19 - March 20)
Today brings out the best in you. Find a good way to gently guide those around you to do what is right.

• Provided by Astrology.com (www.astrology.com)

Radio

KISS92

AM
6.00 Maddy, Jason & Arnold In The Morning
10.00 Carol Smith
PM
1.00 Charmaine Yee
4.00 Shan Wee
8.00 Josh's Goodnight Kiss

ONE FM 91.3

AM
6.00 ONE FM's #1 Breakfast Show With Glenn And The Flying Dutchman
10.00 Cheryl Miles
PM
4.00 Weekdays With ONE FM

MONEY FM 89.3

AM
6.00 The Breakfast Huddle With Elliott Danker, Yasmin Jonkers & Ryan Huang
10.00 Midday With Howie Lim
PM
2.00 Prime Time With Claressa Monteiro
4.00 The Curve With Michelle Martin & Bernard Lim

UFM100.3

AM
6.00 UFM100.3 Mornings With Wenhong, Limei & Xiaozhu
10.00 Lively Life With Kemlin
PM
1.00 Tea With Yuling
4.00 Sing-a-long With Xinying & Weilong
8.00 Feel The Night With Chengyao

96.3 HAO FM

AM
6.00 Morning Drive Time With Jing Yun, De Ming And Jie Qi
10.00 Lunch Break With Anna
PM
1.00 Automation
4.00 Evening Drive Time With Li Yi And Guo Xian
8.00 Night Time With Wei Wen

Tides

SUN RISE/SET TIME: 7.17am/7.20pm
MOON RISE/SET TIME: 4.15am/4.34pm

TIDES TODAY: Singapore: 2.52am (1.8m), 8.37am (2.6m), 3.41pm (0.8m), 10.54pm (2.5m). Desaru: 2.56am (2m), 7.22am (2.3m), 2.45pm (1m), 10.37pm (2.6m). Port Dickson: 4.53am (2.2m), 11.51am (0.8m), 5.23pm (1.8m), 11.32pm (0.5m). Mersing: 3.13am (2.2m), 6.06am (2.3m), 1.47pm (1.2m), 9.43pm (3m).

TIDES TOMORROW: Singapore: 3.52am (1.8m), 9.33am (2.7m), 4.22pm (0.7m), 11.33pm (2.6m). Desaru: 3.52am (2m), 8.16am (2.3m), 3.31pm (0.9m), 11.15pm (2.7m). Port Dickson: 5.38am (2.3m), 12.37pm (0.8m), 6.07pm (2m). Mersing: 4.13am (2.1m), 7.18am (2.3m), 2.38pm (1.1m), 10.22pm (3.1m).

For updates and more details, call Meteorological Service Singapore, NEA, on 6542-7788 or go to www.nea.gov.sg

StarHub TV

HISTORY (CHANNEL 401)

AM
8.00 Storage Wars 10
8.30 Pawn Stars 18
9.30 Forged In Fire 5
10.25 History Drama: Knightfall
11.20 The Warfighters
PM
12.15 Lone Star Restoration
1.10 History Drama: Vikings 5
2.05 History Drama: Knightfall
3.00 Storage Wars: Miami
3.30 The Pickers 11
4.25 History Drama: Vikings 5
5.20 Forged In Fire 5/6.15 The Pickers 11
7.10 Pawn Stars 18
8.05 Storage Wars: Miami
8.30 Storage Wars 10
9.00 Swamp Mysteries With Troy Landry
9.55 Alone 4/10.50 Mountain Men 7
11.45 Lone Star Restoration

LIFETIME (CHANNEL 514)

AM
8.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
9.00 Gok's Fill Your House For Free
10.00 Project Runway: Fashion Startup
11.00 Atlanta Plastic
PM
12.00 Dance Moms 7
1.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
2.00 Beaches
3.35 Born This Way 2
4.30 Little Women LA: Terra's Little Family
5.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
6.00 Idol Moms
7.00 Making A Model With Yolanda Hadid
8.00 The Rap Game 3
9.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
10.00 Bringing Ashley Home
11.35 Idol Moms

HBO (CHANNEL 601)

AM
8.50 The Beguiled (2017)
10.25 Stop-Loss (NC16)
PM
12.10 Dunkirk
1.55 Going In Style (2017) (NC16)
3.30 Crashing 3 (NC16)
4.05 Eagle Eye/6.00 Lilo & Stitch
7.25 Braven (NC16)
9.00 Pitch Perfect 3 (NC16)
10.30 Star Trek (2009)

CINEMAX (CHANNEL 611)

AM
8.15 Renegades (NC16)
10.00 Big Momma's House (NC16)
11.40 Teen Titans: The Judas Contract (NC16)
PM
1.05 The Disappearance (NC16)
1.50 The Perfect Storm
4.00 Driven
5.55 Star Wars: Episode I – The Phantom Menace
8.10 Mercury Rising
10.00 Unbreakable
11.50 Sleepy Hollow (NC16)

HUB E CITY (CHANNEL 825)

AM
8.15 Hot Door Night 16 (HD)
9.15 Dowry (HD)/10.15 Super Boys 2 (HD)
11.45 Fun Abroad (HD)
PM
12.15 Still Loving You (HD)/1.30 Signal (HD)
2.45 Sound Of My Dream 2 (HD)
4.45 Still Loving You (HD)
6.00 Dowry (HD)
7.00 Hot Door Night 16 (HD)
8.00 Mr Player 7 (HD)
10.00 Singer 2019 (Live) (HD)

HUB SPORTS 1 (CHANNEL 201)

AM
11.00 ISU European Figure Skating Championships 2019: Ice Dance Free Dance
PM
2.30 Tennis: ATP Champions Tour 2018
3.00 Tennis: Deuce 2019
3.30 Tennis: ATP World Tour Uncovered 2019/4.00 Mountain Bike: Enduro World Series 2018: Episode 7 Spain Highlights
4.30 Motorsports: FIA World RallyCross Championship 2018 Round 3 Belgium Highlights
5.30 Multi Sport: Action Sports World 2018
6.30 Tennis: 2018 Davis Cup By BNP Paribas Finals: France Vs Croatia Day 2 (Rubber 3)
11.00 Mountain Bike: Crankworx World Tour 2018: Les Gets Highlights

HUB SPORTS 2 (CHANNEL 202)

AM
9.00 Asean Basketball League 2018/19 Hong Kong Eastern Vs Saigon Heat
11.00 Football: Coppa Italia 2018/19 Quarter-finals Inter Milan Vs Lazio
PM
1.00 HSBC World Rugby Sevens World Series 2018/19 Round 3 Hamilton: Match 41 13th Place
1.30 HSBC World Rugby Sevens World Series 2018/19 Round 3 Hamilton: Match 42 Challenge Trophy
2.00 HSBC World Rugby Sevens World Series 2017/18 Round 4 Hamilton: Match 43 5th Place
2.30 HSBC World Rugby Sevens World Series 2018/19 Round 3 Hamilton: Match 44 Bronze Medal Finals
3.00 Wrestling: WWE Smackdown (PG)
4.30 National Basketball League Round 16 Brisbane Bullets Vs Sydney Kings (Live)
6.30 HSBC World Rugby Sevens World Series 2018/19 Round 3 Hamilton: Match 45 Cup Finals
7.30 Magazine: Omnisport.TV
8.00 National Basketball League 2018/19 – NBL Slam/8.30 Asean Basketball League 2018/19 Westports Malaysia Dragons Vs CLS Knights Indonesia (Live)
10.30 Wrestling: WWE Bottomline (PG)
11.30 Magazine: Omnisport.TV
AM
12.00 Wrestling: WWE Smackdown (PG)
1.30 Football: Coppa Italia 2018/19 Quarter-finals Inter Milan Vs Lazio
3.30 The Football Review/3.40 Football: EFL Championship 2018 Matchday 30 Preston North End Vs Derby County (Live)

Singtel TV

CARTOON NETWORK (CHANNEL 226)

AM
7.00 The Tom And Jerry Show
8.00 Running Man Animation
9.00 Grizzly And The Lemmings
9.30 The Tom And Jerry Show
10.00 We Bare Bears
10.30 Supernooobs
11.00 The Powerpuff Girls
PM
12.00 Teen Titans Go!
1.00 We Bare Bears
2.00 Ninjago: Masters Of Spinjitzu
2.30 The Powerpuff Girls
3.00 Running Man Animation
3.30 The Amazing World Of Gumball
4.00 We Bare Bears
4.30 The Powerpuff Girls
5.00 Teen Titans Go!
5.30 Ben 10
6.00 Apple & Onion
6.30 Running Man Animation
7.00 The Tom And Jerry Show
7.30 Grizzly And The Lemmings
7.55 The Heroic Quest Of The Valiant Prince Ivandoe
8.00 We Bare Bears
9.00 Transformers: Cyberverse
9.30 The Powerpuff Girls
10.00 Regular Show
10.30 Steven Universe
11.00 Clarence
11.30 Adventure Time

AXN (HD) (CHANNEL 304)

AM
6.00 MacGyver 2
6.50 Criminal Minds: Suspect Behavior
7.40 Caught On Camera With Nick Cannon 2
8.30 Team Ninja Warrior
9.25 MacGyver 2
10.20 American Ninja Warrior 8
11.15 Caught On Camera With Nick Cannon 3
PM
12.05 Criminal Minds: Suspect Behavior
1.00 Quantico 3
1.55 Team Ninja Warrior
2.50 American Ninja Warrior 8
3.45 MacGyver 2
4.40 Criminal Minds: Suspect Behavior
5.30 American Ninja Warrior 8
6.20 MacGyver 3
7.15 Caught On Camera With Nick Cannon 2
8.10 Instinct
9.05 Charlie's Angels
11.00 Lakeview Terrace

WARNER TV (HD) (CHANNEL 306)

AM
6.00 The Carbonaro Effect
6.50 Top 20 Funniest
7.50 DC's Legends Of Tomorrow
8.40 Supergirl 2
9.25 The Flash 3
10.15 The Carbonaro Effect

11.05 Top 20 Funniest 2
11.50 Getaway
PM
1.30 The Big Bang Theory 9
1.55 Friends 9
2.20 The Carbonaro Effect
3.10 Top 20 Funniest 2
3.55 The Flash 3
4.45 Supergirl 2
5.30 Top 20 Funniest
6.30 The Flash 3
7.20 The Big Bang Theory 9
7.45 Friends 9
8.10 The Big Bang Theory 12
8.35 Young Sheldon 2
9.00 Gotham 5
9.50 The Intern

COMEDY CENTRAL ASIA (HD) (CHANNEL 324)

AM
6.00 At Midnight With Chris Hardwick 2
6.25 The Daily Show 24
6.50 Just For Laughs Gags 12
7.15 Kids Do The Craziest Things
7.40 Mr Bean
8.15 The Reaction Hall Of Fame
8.55 Super Ultimate Candid Camera
10.00 Mr Bean
10.30 Brotherhood
11.25 Saturday Night Live 43
PM
12.10 The Daily Show 24
12.35 The Goldbergs 5
1.25 Hot In Cleveland 6
2.15 The Comedy Jam
3.05 Saturday Night Live 43
3.50 The Goldbergs 5
4.40 Hot In Cleveland 6
5.30 The Comedy Jam
5.55 The Daily Show 24
6.20 Your Face Or Mine 3
6.45 Amazingness
7.05 Billy On The Street 5
7.30 Most Ridiculous Asia With Jason Leong
7.55 Ingorious Pranksters
8.20 The Goldbergs 5
9.10 Hot In Cleveland 6
10.00 Funny As Hell 3
10.30 Inside Amy Schumer 2
10.55 Above Average Presents
11.00 The Jim Jefferies Show
11.25 Above Average Presents
11.30 The Daily Show 24

JIA LE (HD) (CHANNEL 502)

AM
7.00 First Love
8.00 Entrepreneurial Age
9.00 Eagle And Youngster
10.00 100% Wife
PM
12.10 First Love
1.00 In The Name Of Love
2.00 100% Wife
4.10 Entrepreneurial Age
5.00 First Love
6.00 In The Name Of Love
7.00 100% Wife
10.00 Entrepreneurial Age
11.00 Eagle And Youngster

Burger & Lobster to land at Changi

Eunice Quek

The famous Burger & Lobster chain from London is slated to open in the first half of this year at Jewel Changi Airport.

The 81-seat restaurant will be located at Canopy Park, Jewel's top-most floor, where diners can have spectacular views of the majestic 40m-high Rain Vortex, set to be the world's tallest indoor waterfall.

Burger & Lobster's menu remains focused on its prime burger, fresh Atlantic lobster and lobster roll.

Locally sourced ingredients and dishes inspired by local flavours will also be added to the menu on a seasonal basis.

Burger & Lobster – which first opened in London's Mayfair in 2011 – has nine outlets in London, two in New York and four in Bangkok,

Dubai, Genting Highlands and Kuwait City.

All the restaurants offer live lobsters from Nova Scotia, Canada, and beef from Nebraska.

The brand's expansion into Singapore is part of its plans to launch more outlets in Asia.

Burger & Lobster's owner Misha Zelman said in a statement: "We consider ourselves very fortunate to be opening in Singapore and adding Jewel to the global family of restaurants."

The opening of Burger & Lobster at Jewel Changi Airport adds to the bevy of food and beverage outlets opening there, such as New York burger chain Shake Shack and fast-food chain A&W.

euniceq@sph.com.sg



London's Burger & Lobster chain will open in the first half of this year at Jewel Changi Airport. PHOTO: BURGER & LOBSTER

Gwyneth Paltrow sued for alleged ski 'hit-and-run'

WASHINGTON • Mr Terry Sanderson remembers Feb 26, 2016, was a "beautiful day".

He and a group of fellow skiers had plans to hit the slopes at Deer Valley Ski Resort in Park City, Utah.

But what was supposed to be a fun day ended abruptly when Mr Sanderson found himself suffering from "serious brain injuries" and four broken ribs, which he now alleges were caused by Oscar-winning actress Gwyneth Paltrow (right).

The 72-year-old retired optometrist claims that Paltrow, 46, was "skiing out of control" when she hit him from behind, "knocking him down hard, knocking him out", according to a copy of the lawsuit obtained by KUTV.

Instead of staying to help, "Paltrow got up, turned and skied away, leaving Sanderson stunned, lying in the snow, seriously injured", the lawsuit said, describing the incident as a "hit-and-run ski crash".

The lawsuit, filed on Tuesday in Utah state court, also alleges that Mr Eric Christiansen, a Deer Valley ski instructor who was with Paltrow at the time, not only failed to call for help, but "falsely" accused Mr Sanderson of having caused the crash.

Mr Sanderson is suing Paltrow, Mr Christiansen and the resort for "negligent actions", seeking an excess of US\$3.1 million (\$\$4.1 million) in damages.

A spokesman for Paltrow told The Washington Post in an e-mail statement that the lawsuit "is completely without merit", adding, "Anyone who reads the facts will realise that".

Mr Sanderson said during a news conference on Tuesday that his group had been making their way down a beginner's slope.

"Then, I heard this hysterical scream," he said.

In an instant, Mr Sanderson said he felt something hit him in the back near his shoulder blades. The force of the impact knocked him



PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

face first into the slope and left him unconscious.

Mr Craig Ramon, one of the people who had been skiing with Mr Sanderson, witnessed the crash and filled in the blanks.

In a taped interview conducted by one of Mr Sanderson's lawyers, Mr Ramon said he too had heard "a yell... or a noise", before seeing Paltrow hit Mr Sanderson.

Paltrow, Mr Ramon said, was struggling to get up and did not respond to him repeatedly asking her if she was okay.

After getting to her feet, Paltrow started skiing away and the rest of her group followed, Mr Ramon said.

The instructor helped Mr Sanderson up before also leaving the pair behind to go after Paltrow, he said.

Beyond the broken ribs, the lawsuit said Mr Sanderson had suffered a "closed brain injury", which Mr Robert B. Sykes, one of Mr Sanderson's attorneys, likened to "shaken baby syndrome".

Lawyers representing Paltrow "don't deny the collision", but they argue that "Gwyneth Paltrow was downhill and Terry Sanderson hit" her, Mr Sykes said. WASHINGTON POST

On social media



PAYING LIP SERVICE: It looks like Taiwanese actor Talu Wang may just stick to acting after all. On Tuesday, he appeared on Hunan Television's Spring Festival Gala and sang a duet with Chinese actress Jelly Lin (both above). Unfortunately, they were accused of lip-synching by many viewers, with some netizens pointing out that almost all their lip movements did not match the lyrics.

Probably sensing the overwhelming negative sentiments, Wang on Wednesday posted a short message on Weibo, saying: "Okay, I am going back to acting" and included an emoticon with adhesive bandages over the lips.

Both Wang and Lin are starring in an upcoming romantic movie Fall In Love At First Kiss, an adaptation of Japanese manga series Itazura Na Kiss which was also made into a 2005 Taiwanese TV series It Started With A Kiss, starring Joe Cheng and Ariel Lin.

Wang is best known for his breakout role as Hsu Tai-yu in the Taiwanese film Our Times (2015), which also starred Vivian Sung. Jelly Lin is best known for her leading role in the 2016 film, The Mermaid, which was directed by Stephen Chow. PHOTO: WEIBO/TALU WANG

Be a K-pop group's manager – on BTS mobile game

SEOUL • South Korean gaming industry giant Netmarble Games is introducing a new mobile game called BTS World which combines gaming and K-pop.

BTS World is a simulation game built around the idea of grooming the BTS bandmates into superstars, with users playing the artists' managers.

More than 10,000 images and 100 videos featuring the K-pop sensation will be available exclusively on the game, Netmarble said.

The band will also perform all the music.

Netmarble launched an official website and Twitter account for the game last Friday to great response. The Twitter post teasing the upcoming game had earned more than 176,000 likes and 72,000 retweets as of yesterday afternoon.

The game manufacturer, in partnership with the label Big Hit Entertainment, previously announced its plans to develop more games featuring the boy group as part of its global expansion strategy.

BTS World is slated for release during the first quarter of this year.

Meanwhile, Big Hit Entertainment has denied media reports that



Be BTS' virtual manager on mobile game BTS World. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

BTS will be releasing a new album in May.

It clarified in a statement that the date has yet to be decided.

The septet's last release was Love Yourself: Answer in August last year. The group renewed its contract with the label last October for the next seven years.

The album has remained on the Billboard 200 for 22 consecutive weeks. The other two albums of the

Love Yourself trilogy, Her and Tear, also ranked No. 2 and No. 3 on the United States-based magazine's world albums chart.

BTS are stopping by Hong Kong next month and Thailand in April for their Love Yourself concert tour which kicked off in Seoul in August last year.

They performed in Singapore on Jan 19.

THE KOREA HERALD/ASIA NEWS NETWORK

In short

Meghan Markle not returning to Suits

The creator of Suits has all but ruled out a cameo by Meghan Markle, Britain's Duchess of Sussex, in the final season of the American legal drama series, according to website Entertainment Tonight.

"We're not currently pursuing asking Meghan Markle to leave her position with the royal family and join us," Mr Aaron Korsh said at the Television Critics Association press tour. "I would love it but I think chances are pretty close to zero."

Police seek suspects in Smollett assault case

Chicago police said on Wednesday that they were looking for two "potential persons of interest" spotted on a surveillance camera as part of their investigation into the attack on American actor-singer Jussie Smollett, who said he had been assaulted by two people yelling racial and homophobic slurs, The New York Times reported.

The statement came after detectives reviewed hundreds of hours of video over a day and a half as they tried to solve what they were calling a possible hate crime.

Ariana Grande's ode to barbecue

Ariana Grande's attempt to ink an ode to her hit single 7 Rings backfired on Wednesday, after social media quickly chimed in to tell the American pop star that the Japanese characters on her palm tattoo actually translated to "shichirin" – a small charcoal grill. Grande, 25, had posted a now-deleted photo of the new body art on Instagram before her fans pointed out the error, Agence France-Presse reported.